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TREATMENT.

BY HUMFREY JORDAN.

Reacting immediately to the altered throb of the engines, the passengers in the saloon gulped down the remainder of their dinners and hurried on deck, lining up along the starboard rails. The great ship slid with a gentle hiss through the quiet sea, going dead slow, a phosphorescent ripple at the stem, a smooth untroubled water astern, and all about her the sparkling softness of unruffled star-lit sea. After many days passed in the same uneventful fashion, remote in their floating hostelry out on an empty sea, the passengers along the rails chatted eagerly. The men and women who professed a hatred of ocean voyaging sniffed contentedly and murmured "Thank God"; those persons who give to the wide seas a simple and unchanging devotion also sniffed the air; and those few passengers to whom the business of sailing across the waters of the world was strange followed the example of the others, and recognising the smell of land, that compound of many odours that reaches far out into the clean sweetness of salt air, thrilled to a new experience.

Away on the starboard bow lights, which had not the twinkle of stars, which did not rise and fall gently as the lights of passing ships, showed in a strung out cluster; beyond the lights, vague shadows of deep violet and purple, appeared the highlands of Ceylon. And those lights and those vague shadows loosed the tongues of the passengers. As the liner moved gently forward waiting for the signal which should permit her entry into the harbour of Colombo, those travellers who were not embroiled in a final rush of preparation found after weeks of familiar intercourse a new

eagerness in conversation. As usual, some worthy and assured soul positively and emphatically identified the lights of the hotel at Mount Lavinia on the wrong side of the town; there was, as usual, a heated argument as to which illuminated group indicated the G.O.H., and, arising out of that, the inevitable comparison of the merits of that hotel with those of the Galle Face. Planters, who had made the island their home for thirty years and more, who had gone on leave a dozen times or so to an England growing increasingly strange and unfamiliar, who had seen both hotels enlarged, improved, rebuilt, championed the peculiar merits of their first love. The pro-G.O.H.s declared that in first making choice of a pub and in sticking to their choice they proved themselves sane men; the Galle Face supporters wondered at the stark ignorance concerning hotel comforts in the East which stalked the world of travelled men. But both parties would fall gladly upon any unwary creature who admitted not having had the elementary prudence to book a room, assuring him that in the best hotel in Colombo, whichever it might be, he could not hope to find accommodation. A Yankee globe-trotting craft would be in, swamping the place with tourists. There always was one in when a liner from home arrived.

Then signal lamps flashed out at the distant pierhead; above the awnings on the unseen bridge the engine-room telegraph sounded; the vessel shivered, quickening her pace, and a new turn was given to the gabble of talk along the rails.

"This," said a man, who knew the ship and spoke of her captain without reverence, "is well up to Bonzo's usual form. We shall be tied up by ten o'clock, and he will start working cargo straight away and keep it up all night. He always plays that trick if he can, the little devil."

"Then," a masterful dame announced with decision, "I shall insist on being moved into another cabin; mine is over the steam-pipe for the winches. If this Company thinks that it can drive me to the expense of going ashore for the night or can make me go without sleep, it is very much mistaken."

So for a time the people who were going on, the people whose business took them farther across the seas, held the talk. They debated the usual topics eagerly: the thoughtlessness of steamship companies in making their passengers uncomfortable in ports of call; the chances of finding better accommodation aboard when the shore-going crowd had left; the skill of thieves, and the necessity for keeping cabins closed and locked; the amusements provided by Colombo; the likelihood of the ship stopping long enough to make a trip to Kandi or Nuralia worth doing; the singular absence of any officers able or willing

to give definite information about what was going to happen.

As the ship slipped past the pierheads and entered the wide harbour of one of the greatest sea junctions of the world, as the wideness of ocean left her and she was wrapped round with the sights, the sounds, the bustle of the land, a man standing near the entrance to the smoking-room turned to a passenger beside him.

"I feel," he said, "like a confounded tourist. The last time I came this way I was one of you fellows. Had a job of work in the East. Now! nothing to do but look on."

"I dare say it won't be as bad as all that, Richardson," the other man laughed. "While you are here you'll find plenty to do. By all accounts——"

He checked himself, and tried to turn the last sentence into a cough.

"What do you mean by that?" Richardson asked, a little sharply.

"Mean!" the other declared. "Why, that I never yet knew of a retired planter who didn't find plenty to do to fill in a visit. Wish I'd made enough to go home for good. You wouldn't get me grumbling. Must find my missis. Galle Face, I suppose? So am I, for a week. See you later."

He hurried off, not giving Richardson a chance to question him again.

Then the ship picked up her moorings; the doctor at the bottom of the accommodation ladder met the Port Authority launch with a clean bill of health; the Customs officials and police came aboard; and a swarm of launches, sampans, and odd craft manœuvred and fought noisily for position.

Within a minute or two after the arrival of the officials the decks and the public rooms were crowded. Half-caste hotel and motor-car touts thrust professional cards into the hands of anything that looked like a passenger, and were ejected by harried stewards from the vicinity of staterooms. Baggage got jammed in narrow places and impeded movement. Friends and relations met, and lost each other again in the crowd. Many people, for completely inadequate reasons, suddenly became the victims of breathless hurry. Native porters scurried about barefoot under vast loads of hand baggage. Anxious stewards kept careful watch over those passengers who were dilatory with tips. A decent segment of the white population of Colombo appeared to have arrived on board for a mild form of free entertainment. A more purposeful section of the same population pressed their way steadily into the smoking-room, quietly determined to consume as much of the ship's liquor as time and the generosity of their acquaintances permitted. The sedate neatness and order of a ship voyaging the high seas vanished before the assault of a noisy throng, heedless of the importance of sailormen and their methodical discipline.

Without taking any active

part in the thronging bustle around him, Richardson remained standing just outside the smoking-room door, nodding to and exchanging greetings with passing acquaintances, waiting until he should be found by the people whom he expected to meet him. Then a tall, burly, and jovial person, a planter beyond any manner of doubt, appeared at the top of the accommodation ladder, glanced round, saw Richardson's raised hand, and made for it. It took him some time to move along the deck, for most of the passengers whom he met either, being males, beat him on the back and called him Bob, or, being women, shook him by the hand, and declared that they were extremely glad to see Mr Hawkins again. While Hawkins moved slowly towards the smoking-room door, Richardson searched the crowd as though he expected some one to follow the tall man, and, not finding the some one, tried to hide any sign of disappointment.

"Hullo, Harry!" Hawkins called in a fine carrying voice as he at last reached his friend. "Glad to see you again. How's England and the country squire business? Fine, by the look of you."

"Not too bad, Bob," Richardson told him. "And you're not looking exactly at death's door. But where is Basil?"

"He'll meet you at the Galle Face," Hawkins answered, producing a note. "Had an important engagement to-night, I believe. Here is the boy's explanation."

He handed the note to Richardson, and watched his face while he read it, seeming content when a certain grimness showed in his friend's expression but no comment on the note was made.

"Stuff ready?" he asked. "Good. I commandeered old Peter's launch. We'll push along without making that fact public. There's Bonzo by the ladder. Kiss him and say good-night, and we'll toddle off."

As the launch slipped through the still water of the harbour, across the bows, beneath the sterns of many tall ships noisy and active with the affairs of commerce, past two Navy cruisers, silent, dapper, dignified, as they approached the landing stage with the shore lights and the ships' lights mirrored in long wavy lines about them, the two men talked eagerly of old acquaintances, their prosperity or decline, their domestic adventures, their activity, retirement, or their deaths. On the landing stage, as Richardson's baggage was being conveyed to a motor, Hawkins called a halt.

"Let your trunk go on to the Galle Face," he declared; "your room is waiting for you, and they haven't forgotten your name yet. Myself, I'm all for decency and order. First, you have a quick one with me at the G.O.H.—and you'll see a bit of a difference in it,—then we'll take rick-

shaws to that pothouse which you think so much of. Just like the old times when I was going on leave and you were coming back."

So, since Richardson raised no objection to this matter of decency and order, they strolled gently through the hot scented night to where the lights of the Grand Oriental Hotel awaited them.

Inside the high white lounge of the hotel, beneath a fan, commanding a good view of the main entrance, an almost incredibly fat man sat in a cane chair, which he seemed to overflow. His bald head, fringed with grey hair, gleamed; his white face was complacent and good-tempered; his small eyes twinkled amongst wrinkles and pouches. He sat very still, with his podgy hands on the arms of his chair and his short legs stretched out. His chin and the folds of his neck obscured his collar; his ankles bulged over his shoes. His white suit showed signs of wear, though it was obviously fresh from the dhobi; the cuffs of his shirt were frayed. Three-quarters or more of the men arriving at the hotel spoke to him in passing; very few of the women appeared to notice him. He seemed to know everybody and everybody's business. Beside him, on a small table, was a small peg of whisky and soda, apparently untouched. If one of the men who came up and hailed him insisted upon his drinking, he would sign to a waiter to remove his glass. When the new drink arrived he would touch it with his lips, smile at the giver, and place the glass on the table beside him. He appeared a sociable but very abstemious person.

Richardson on entering the hotel laughed at sight of the fat man, and went up to him.

"Hullo, Vat," he said, "how's the world treating you?"

"Normally, quite normally," the fat man answered in a pleasant chuckling voice. "Heard you were coming, Richardson. You look well."

"I am," Richardson agreed. "But it's years since I saw you. I went home five years ago."

"Four," the fat man corrected him. "Four years and seven months. You went by Orient and struck the height of the sou'west monsoon. How are your wife and daughters?"

"Going strong," Richardson told him.

"I see your boy," the fat man stated, "occasionally."

Richardson did not reply, and the immense person in the chair gave him a quick glance.

"They tell me," he continued conversationally, "that England is not the promised home for heroes yet."

"Not so that you could notice it," Richardson informed him with a laugh. "In fact, it's a funny spot to live in these days."

"Then," the fat man declared, "I shall not go home. Hawkins," he continued, pointing with a corpulent finger,

"has just got your drink over there. Mustn't keep you. See you again."

Later, as they were borne side by side in rickshaws along the road beside the sea towards the Galle Face Hotel, Richardson turned to Hawkins.

"Extraordinary old creature the Vat," he declared. "Same as ever, I suppose."

"Just. Goes off once a year as usual."

"And comes back again to that chair in the G.O.H. and the bungalow that no one has ever entered?"

"He does."

"Still calls himself William Robins?"

"I reckon he's that for good now."

"He was here when we came out as boys thirty years ago. What age do you put him at, Bob?"

"Over fifty, under eighty," Hawkins laughed. "I'm not going nearer than that."

Richardson threw away the stump of a cheroot as the rickshaws swung in at the gates of the Galle Face.

"I should be sorry to hear that the old fellow had pegged out," he announced. "He's the eternal beachcomber right enough and possibly an old scoundrel, but I like him."

"In thirty years to my knowledge," Hawkins declared, "he's never borrowed a cent from any one nor ever cadged a drink. I can't say that of myself."

With that they left the character of the Vat and turned to the matter which had brought Richardson out East again. The rickshaws stopped at the entrance to the hotel, and the two men got out and entered the building. A dance, something in the nature of a gala performance, was in progress, for a Yankee globe-trotting liner lay in the harbour; a jazz band made violent noises from the ballroom; and the place was crowded and very hot. A boy of about twenty-five, a slighter, weaker edition of Richardson, was standing near the steps leading up to the ballroom, keeping a wary eye upon the main entrance, talking to a girl half-hidden behind a pillar. As Richardson and Hawkins appeared the boy said something to the girl, who replied with a high cackle of laughter, and went over to meet the two older men.

"Hullo, father," he said, greeting Richardson. "I'm awfully sorry I couldn't get down to the harbour to meet you, but——"

"I got your note, Basil," Richardson cut in, eyeing the boy critically. "And I've just caught a sight of the important engagement."

His son flushed slightly and laughed.

"I wasn't certain whether you would be in to-night," he explained, "and I had to fix up this dance some days ago."

"Don't apologise," his father answered; "I understand. But, my boy, as far as my own taste goes, I prefer them pure white."

Basil Richardson flushed again, more deeply; Hawkins chuckled; and Richardson

turned the talk to England and his home. The boy made proper inquiries after the health of his mother and sisters, their doings, and the doings of their friends. After half an hour or so of talk, which he appeared anxious to confine to questions and answers about people in England, he began to show signs of restlessness. When the signs had developed into repeated glances towards the ballroom, Richardson acknowledged them.

"I gather," he stated, "that the engagement is still of importance."

"Well, you know," the boy stammered, "these days one fixes up a partner for the evening. Rather letting her down. I mean to say——"

"No need to say anything more," his father assured him. "I appreciate the situation. We'll talk in the morning. Good-night, Basil."

And the boy, seizing the opportunity to hand, apparently content to ignore future embarrassments, escaped with alacrity. Richardson remained staring across the lounge, thinking; Hawkins watched him without speaking.

"I think," Richardson declared after a pause, "that I'll take a closer look at one of Basil's friends."

He led the way to the ballroom, and looked with interest at the swaying crowd. The place was very full; the heat was intense; but the couples, closely clasped, indulged in their peculiar movements with faces of reverential solemnity. Basil Richardson appeared in the revolving throng, dancing well, his expression that of dreamy seriousness. The lady in his arms was very blond, but she also, very obviously, had native blood in her.

Richardson looked and turned away with a frown. He crossed the lounge quickly and made his way to a broad colonnade that opened upon a small garden facing the sea. The place was empty except for a single couple, and on that hot night, after the stuffy humanity laden air of the ballroom, the light breeze from the water smelt clean and almost cool. Richardson found chairs at the farther end of the colonnade, summoned a barefoot waiter and ordered drinks, then sat in silence waiting for them. Hawkins filled a pipe, staring at the stars.

"When," Richardson stated, after the waiter had brought the drinks, "I first learned that Basil was doing no good, I suggested that he should come home to a job in England. He refused absolutely. He likes the East, and means to stop in it, so he wrote."

Hawkins nodded, but neither answered nor took his eyes off the stars.

"I informed him," Richardson continued, "that I should make him no allowance, and that he would get no salary unless he earned it. If he wants to work, he can work up to being manager of my property here, while I live, and owner when I die. If he does not want to work, nothing

from me. I made that quite clear."

Hawkins nodded again, turning his eyes from the stars to the friend beside him.

"How much does he know about planting?" Richardson asked.

"Quite a bit," Hawkins declared. "He learned very quickly during the three years he was with me. He's no fool."

"Benton retires from my managership in eighteen months," Richardson explained. "Assuming that Basil worked during those eighteen months, could he take on the management?"

Hawkins considered the question carefully before he answered.

"Assuming that," he said, "I believe he could—successfully."

Richardson waited for more, but did not get it.

"Your letters," he stated, "Benton's letters, between the lines Basil's own letters! I've had the thing made obvious. No one aboard mentioned the subject, except Palmer, who let out a hint as we passed the pierheads to-night, but I knew that they all realised that I was coming out because the boy was playing the fool. It's damned hard to know one's own son, Bob. Don't mince matters. What is the truth?"

Hawkins tapped out his pipe, and stared again at the stars. The quiet murmur of the sea upon the beach reached the two men's ears intermittently between bursts of jazz music. Richardson's face looked anxious, almost haggard; he leaned forward in his chair and clasped his hands. Hawkins turned from the stars and sighed.

"Harry, old man," he declared, "I don't know the cause exactly, but—but it looks like a pretty hopeless case."

"Drink?"

Richardson's voice was sharp.

"No—not yet."

"Women?"

"No more than other boys."

"What, then?"

"Drift, simply drift!" Hawkins' voice was very earnest. "These days people who are shy of a job of work don't cut much ice out here. If they are sufficiently rich they may be tolerated, although they won't be admired. Basil, for some reason I can't get at, began about two years ago to show himself work shy, to loaf. People told him about it. He didn't like being told, especially by women. Instead of starting in to prove he had got a backbone he went on loafing, but he took to going about with the people who would never criticise him to his face—the piebalds. You saw to-night! . . . He's a young god with them, and will be while the money lasts. The others still know him, because he is your son; but they won't much longer. Not the women. Trouble is, Basil seems content with the situation."

"My God," said Richardson; for he had no illusions about where that one particular

step down would lead in the East.

He got up and paced the colonnade, taking a cheroot from his case and lighting it; then he came back to his chair and went on with the conversation, speaking with marked deliberation.

"That girl to-night?"

"He apparently takes pleasure in her society, that's all."

"Marriage?"

"I think not. Just poodle-faking."

"With half-castes! Is he always at it?"

Richardson's voice was very bitter.

"Oh, he mixes it with other amusements. A little bar loafing. A little gambling."

"With the same crowd?"

"With the chi-chi lot and the remittance men. I've told you the others are dropping him."

There was unmistakable sympathy in Hawkins' voice, and he looked at his friend anxiously; but Richardson was staring at the toes of his shoes.

"He's over twenty-five," he stated. "Too old to force physically. I know he's weak. But there is decent stuff in the boy, Bob."

"Sure of it," Hawkins mumbled. "Still, time is getting short."

"What do you mean by that?" Richardson demanded, a note of fear in his voice.

Hawkins leaned across the table, and spoke frankly.

"The loafing," he declared, "is nothing, or not much. Lots of boys have a patch of it when the climate begins to tell. You and I probably did, and have forgotten it. The trouble with Basil is the way he behaved, as I told you, when people told him he was becoming a loafer. He just drifted down to the people who wouldn't tell him that. I've been at him, so have most of your friends. No good. He keeps away from his own kind because he knows that they think him a waster, and he doesn't like being considered that. But he doesn't seem to realise what being taken on by the coffee-coloured lot means. Unless he realises that it means going down with no hope of return, with all the odds against him and the usual finish when his money is gone, there is nothing to be done. Time's short because the goodwill of your name is pretty nearly exhausted. I heard yesterday that his name is coming off the list at Government House. First step—the others follow quick."

Richardson nodded his head, staring across the little patch of garden to the quiet starlit sea.

"I used," he murmured, "to be thankful that Basil was not old enough to be killed in the war—like Harry was."

Hawkins got up abruptly, and walked across the colonnade to tap out his pipe against a pillar. When he came back his manner was business-like.

"If," he declared, "you don't succeed to-morrow morn-

ing in making Basil realise the truth, I've got a suggestion."

"I shan't make him," Richardson answered dully. "What is it?"

"You'll probably think me mad," Hawkins assured him, "but it's a case for gambling on whatever chance there is. The Vat might help."

"The Vat!" Richardson gasped. "Good Lord, man! The Vat!"

"Remember young Beadle?" Hawkins explained. "Soon after you left he started drinking. Got too bad for ordinary people, and had to booze alone or with the chi-chi bunch. It looked hopeless. He went off somewhere with the Vat, and came back like a man pretty badly scared. He's been on the water waggon for four years, and looks like stopping there. Respectable, hard-working citizen again, and all that. As things are, it's worth considering."

So until the jazz band became finally silent for the night Hawkins and Richardson talked.

And the following evening, in Hawkins' room at the G.O.H., the fat man who called himself William Robins sat in a chair and overflowed it. He smiled genially at Basil Richardson, who appeared sulky.

"As I understand the arrangement," the Vat stated, "I am to show you something of a very interesting country—Burma—before you settle down again as Assistant Manager of your father's plantation."

The boy murmured "Yes," and Richardson nodded.

"Our tour," the fat man continued, "may last anything up to but not over six months, and I control the purse strings. If, during that time, you want to leave me and refuse to continue the tour you will be left absolutely without money. That's agreed?"

Richardson nodded again, but the boy replied.

"I don't want to start family disputes by calling the whole thing sheer madness," he declared with laboured sarcasm, "but I should like to know whether you think that I shall be anxious to leave you. Seems incredible."

The Vat chuckled, and heaved himself slowly out of his chair.

"One never knows," he answered, picking up his hat, "but I incline to think you will be anxious—very. Meet you aboard to-morrow."

He smiled fatly, waved aside Hawkins' offer of a drink, and waddled out of the room.

. . . . . .

On the way to Rangoon Basil Richardson distinctly enjoyed himself. The relief of being amongst complete strangers who did not burden him with good advice about the ordering of his life nor make it evident that they considered him a waster was very pleasant. Also he found that the passengers were, on the whole, a very decent crowd, whose society he enjoyed. Finally, he saw very little of the Vat, who appeared a somewhat self-effac-

ing person. The fat old man had arranged that Basil Richardson should sit at the captain's table, between a general's wife and daughter, but had fixed for himself the table at which the second officer presided. For this Basil Richardson was grateful, since the arrangement did not emphasise the fact that Mr William Robins was his companion. The Vat was perfectly presentable, appeared absolutely at his ease in any company, and certainly had a prettier gift of conversation than many people, but Basil Richardson, who knew something of the mystery which attached to his reputation, who had met him chiefly in the second-rate bars of Colombo, where flashy youths of mixed origin sought unsuccessfully to make him drunk, was glad not to be outwardly associated with him. The prestige of the captain's table and the society of English ladies were making him particular. He found time pass very pleasantly; and he came to believe the story, which he told to the general's wife and daughter, that he had been rather overworking himself on his plantation, and had found a short holiday advisable. In addition, on the third night out from Colombo, he had a really brilliant hour at poker, with the luck absolutely his, and he won twenty odd pounds sterling. He foresaw that this pleasant little sum would be very handy should he decide to put an end to the absurd tour of Burma and rid himself of the Vat's society.

But on the last night before reaching Rangoon two things occurred to ruffle the smoothness of an enjoyable holiday. At that hour when the ladies had gone to dress for dinner and men were consuming quick drinks in the smoking-room with an eye on the clock, the Vat, going to his bath, met Basil Richardson on the main deck and engaged him in talk. The sun was down and the afterglow had dimmed; the flat sea was lit with beautiful reflections of pale lemon and primrose; and far away on the starboard quarter the lighthouse on the Andaman Islands flashed.

"It," said the Vat, hugging a silk kimono about his enormous stomach, "is a curious thing that, the officers, stewards, and yourself excepted, there are only two people aboard this ship who know me or even know of me."

"Fame unrecognised sort of thing," Basil Richardson laughed, thinking the fat man rather grotesquely vain.

The Vat's eyes twinkled among their pouches, and he turned from contemplation of the sea to give his companion a quick glance of amusement.

"Yet," he continued, "ninety per cent of these complete strangers recognise me for what I am. Ponder upon that, young man. And so to bathe!"

Chuckling to himself, he rolled off to the bathroom, leaving the boy staring.

The second incident, which happened later that night, was more material. Basil Richard-

son played poker again; William Robins played for the first time. Basil Richardson lost thirty-one pounds to William Robins, and had to pay across the table, thus reducing his cash resources to the sum of twelve rupees.

Next morning when they had left the Brig astern and were moving sedately up the Rangoon River with the gilded cupola of the great pagoda growing clearer through the haze of heat, Basil Richardson was unable to tell the general's wife and the general's daughter anything very definite about his plans. He might, he informed them, find business, which would mean moving on, awaiting him at his agents; but, this to the general's daughter, if he did stop in Rangoon he would certainly call if he might. And the general's wife, confirming her daughter's statement that he might, smiled on the boy.

"Of course," she said, "we all know that you successful planters are enormously rich, but poker with a man like that Mr Robins is certainly a rich man's pastime. Oh, I'm a shameless gossip, and I daresay the amount you lost was trebled and quadrupled before it got to my ears. Anyhow, you mustn't be offended at an old woman's advice. Somehow, without knowing him, of course, I feel that Mr Robins is an unsuitable subject for your—charity."

She laughed pleasantly, and her daughter declared that any man who never gambled was sure to have secret vices. Yet Basil Richardson, aware that at that moment his wine bill was being settled and his stewards were being tipped by this same unsuitable subject, experienced difficulty in summoning a natural smile. The absurdity of his position galled him.

But the Vat was extremely tactful; he kept well out of the way when the steamer tied up alongside the wharf, and he did not claim his companion until the general, his womenfolk, and the other passengers of consequence had gone ashore. Basil Richardson, recognising this tact with thankfulness, told himself that he would wait until they were settled in their hotel before coming to a thorough understanding about the future. But the dreary delights of the Rangoon hotels did not claim them. Instead, they drove from the ship to the outskirts of the European quarter, past the houses and bungalows that are trim and have neat carefully tended gardens, to a dilapidated area of scattered buildings, waste spaces, and decaying compounds. A wooden structure of ancient pattern, lacking paint and needing repair, indelibly stamped as third-rate, and obviously overlooked by any sort of prosperity, advertised the fact that it was the "Chatsworth Private Residential Hotel." Here, to Basil Richardson's amazed disgust, they stopped, and were shown by a very unclean Madras house-boy to two stuffy ill-

furnished huts in the compound.

The Vat appeared to be known in this unpleasant boarding-house, and extracted some degree of promptness in service from the servants. But he set aside all Basil Richardson's protests with a fat smile.

"The place," he declared, "has the merit of being cheap. Beside that, it has the advantage of acquainting you with a side of life in the East which I am afraid you do not fully appreciate. We shall not be here very long."

This Basil Richardson, since his available cash consisted of twelve rupees, had to accept; but he went to his uncomfortable and stuffy hut sulkily, and spent the remainder of the hot morning, until lunch was announced, smoking and meditating upon what he would say to Robins that evening when they had a thorough understanding. Lunch appalled him; but the greasy vileness of the food almost escaped his attention. The company held his interest. When he arrived on the verandah from his stuffy hut there were four girls, much painted and very strikingly clothed, standing about the entrance to the dining-room, so that he could not enter without brushing past them. He hung back at the top of the verandah steps, but escape was denied him. The four girls, whose voices were shrill, who spoke with the curious clipped accent of the half-caste and made excessive play with their eyes, fell upon him as their legitimate prey. With little shrieks and giggles, wriggling of the hips and posturing after the fashion of dress mannequins, they engaged him in conversation. Without excuse or reason they plunged into talk of home, which word, although they mispronounced it, was definitely shown to refer to England; they were also strangely eager to exhibit their knowledge of the names of the principal streets in London. Angry, embarrassed, and monosyllabic, Basil Richardson hailed the arrival of the Vat on the verandah with immense relief, and the fact that the sordid dining-room was provided with separate tables as sheer good-fortune. Two country-born clerks of uninspiring aspect appeared during the course of the meal and supplied the four girls with food for more shrieking and giggling; but although Basil Richardson exercised himself to the utmost to keep up a continuous and animated conversation with his fat companion, he was loudly and pitilessly dragged into the general badinage. The proprietress of the ghastly establishment, a gaunt Englishwoman with a grim eye, who sat at a table near the service entrance and abused the two unclean house-boys in pungent Hindustani, made his lot worse by loudly praising the unpleasant food which he rejected. Before the meal was out the boy bolted to his stuffy hut.

The Vat followed him there, and explained that business would occupy him the whole

of the afternoon, but that they would meet again about seven and go out for the evening. He listened with a smile to the boy's heated declaration that they would certainly have an explanation in the evening.

"I am sorry," he chuckled, pausing in the doorway, "that you are not enjoying yourself. But they certainly are rather appalling in their right surroundings. Money and the setting of, say, the Galle Face does improve them."

Throughout the hot afternoon Basil Richardson lay on the bed in the stuffy hut, meditating. There were moments when, having contemplated the stained red tapestry cloth on the table, the torn lace curtains with their faded silk bows, the two oleographs of the King and Queen upon the walls, the absence of fan or punkah, he framed sentences of unanswerable command with which he should induce the Vat to meet his wishes. Then he thought of the general's daughter and his promised call, and the absurdity of his position so filled him with indignation that he sweated profusely. Finally, he was reduced to facing the fact that he was without adequate funds and without the means of obtaining them in a strange land. The difficulty which he experienced in obtaining sufficient hot water to bathe himself in the leaky zinc wash-tub in the dirty bathroom attached to his hut helped to impress him with the necessity for the exercise of diplomacy, if he wished to alter his present ridiculous situation without delay.

He waited until it was dark before he left his hut, and then, from the compound, carefully reconnoitred the verandah of the main building to see if the Vat was there. The four girls and another of the same sort were visible and audible, their shrill voices and clipped accents drowning the loud call of insects. They wore what he felt certain they would describe as demi-toilette. Each of the four whom he had met at lunch was accompanied by a youth with native blood in him; the fifth girl, somewhat apart from the others, talked very confidentially with a young Englishman. Basil Richardson heard his voice, and judged him to be a gentleman and slightly drunk. The four girls and the four youths kept glancing at this couple, giggling and nodding. The gaunt proprietress watched the Englishman closely. Basil Richardson found himself suddenly speculating whether she would claim a commission if the half-drunk youth were jockeyed into marriage. He shuddered; turned away; and hurried to the Vat's hut.

"I can't stick this any longer," he announced, his diplomacy forgotten. "You've damn well got to get me out of it."

"I thought you might be displeased," the fat man replied. "Personally I shall not object to a decent meal to-night. Come on."

They left the place in si-

lence, walking. Basil Richardson was again concerned with diplomacy and the urgent need of accomplishing what he desired that night; but he protested when his companion hailed two rickshaws.

"I've always heard," he objected, "that for some reason or other decent people don't use rickshaws in Rangoon."

"They don't," the Vat chuckled fatly. "That is the precise reason why we are using them."

Silent again, they were conveyed through the hot much-scented night to Andersons; and, as Basil Richardson recognised their destination as a bar and restaurant of high repute, he grew uneasy. If he should happen to meet any of the acquaintances he had made aboard ship, he did not wish to be found in the Vat's company; and the thought that any of those acquaintances might learn of the unspeakable boarding-house from which he had come filled him with positive fear. He stepped out of his rickshaw, leaving the fat man to pay the fares, and hurried into the bar, glancing round anxiously, prepared to do a bolt if he should recognise a face. But he knew no one; and he gulped down a cocktail with which his companion supplied him, and felt better. The place was crowded, but they passed almost unnoticed. One or two men nodded, without enthusiasm, to the fat man; one passing them close hesitated, said "Hullo, Vat. Back again. Business good," smiled curiously at the boy, and passed on.

They dined at a table in a corner of a room where there were no ladies; and although Basil Richardson was thankful to taste decent food again, he was silent, and almost forgot to eat in his anxiety to choose a suitable opening for the thorough understanding which he was determined to force. The Vat maintained a monologue on Burmese habits and customs until fruit had been placed upon the table; then he leaned back so that his chair creaked, and smiled broadly at the boy across the table.

"I am afraid," he declared, "that you will not have time to call on General and Mrs Jarrold. They go to Maymyo the day after to-morrow, and we shall be very busy."

Basil Richardson flushed, checked a hurried retort, hesitated, then spoke with sulky candour.

"You and my father can call it a win, if you want to," he said. "I acknowledge that I was a fool to get mixed up with the half-castes. Buy me a ticket, and I'll go back to the plantation and do a job of work. I conclude that that is the idea."

The Vat stretched out a fat hand and selected a mangostine, which he peeled with care.

"What a lot even a young girl can accomplish!" he wheezed. "But centuries ago in England I once attended a Revivalist meeting. Since then

I have been firmly convinced that sudden conversions are unstable. We still have a great many interesting things to see."

And Basil Richardson, although he tried, almost hysterically, could not drive the thorough understanding beyond that.

But the following day they moved from the ghastly boarding house, and went to live in an ancient wooden bungalow on the banks of the river, surrounded by streets of native dwellings. This bungalow, although old and cheaply furnished, was scrupulously clean, and, from its situation facing the river, occasionally almost airy. There was no luxury about it, and not much of comfort, but contrasting with the intense squalor and filth of its surroundings, it had something of an air of clean decency.

From this headquarters Basil Richardson made acquaintance with certain aspects of life in Rangoon; but he did not see the sights which tourists seek in that uninspiring city of the East. He never entered the Pegu Club, the Boat Club, or the Gymkana; he did not drive round the lakes in the evening or visit the Zoological Gardens. The problem of whether he should risk his white man's prestige by taking off his shoes and entering the Shwe Dagon Pagoda was one with which he was not faced. Indeed it seemed to him, as the weeks passed, that he moved in a world where the white man had no prestige, and that even in that world he was continually descending. By day for the most part, through the slow hours of intense heat, he did very little but loaf and smoke, doze, and read such books or papers as he could obtain; by night, in the airless oppression of the weeks before the rains, he was shown a life he did not wish to see. He was kept without ready money. Whenever he protested, querulously or abusively, demanding occupation and some sort of allowance of cash, the Vat met his protests with a wheezy chuckle and a reply of which he scarcely troubled to vary the phrasing.

"It is advisable," he insisted, "that a young man of your type should see certain things. The necessary ingredients for the understanding of those things are poverty and enforced idleness. You have them both."

At first Basil Richardson was introduced to a selection of third-rate bars and places of amusement where the bulk of the company present, men and women, had varying degrees of native blood in them, but where there was a good proportion of seedy European men. These Europeans, who still maintained a certain outward show of prosperity, sponged shamelessly upon the others. Basil Richardson discovered that in these places he could obtain as much free drink as he wished. In Colombo, in haunts only slightly superior, he had been willing to confer

distinction on the half-breeds by accepting their hospitality; in Rangoon in surroundings scarcely more flashy and sordid, seeing these people nightly and in bulk, he jibbed at the idea of drinking at their expense, and began to loathe the sight of Englishmen who did. During that phase of his initiation, when his boredom equalled his distaste, he never went near a place of entertainment where he would expect to meet a white man of any decency. Nightly, until he was sick of the whole business, he met men of pure Western origin who considered free drink and the free favours of half-caste women a fair exchange for their self-respect. Occasionally by day he was taken by the Vat to offices, not the offices of European firms or of the larger native houses. There he saw certain of these sponging Europeans working as clerks for Burmese and Chinese employers, obviously despised, clearly not trusted, intermittently employed on account of their knowledge of English.

After three weeks or more of this life he protested again violently, but got the Vat's invariable reply. So he wrote bitterly to his father. Awaiting the reply, he began to interest himself in his companion. Being a young man without any very wide experience of his fellows, he could neither place the fat creature nor understand him. He was aware that the man would not have seemed ill at ease or out of place at Government House; he was also aware that the fellow carefully avoided anything but chance intercourse with Englishmen of his own kind. To the European outcasts of Rangoon the fat man was known as Robins; but they never sponged upon him, and they treated him with some degree of respect. One night, his curiosity getting the better of him, Basil Richardson tackled the Vat direct.

They were seated in a drinking house close to their headquarters, to which they frequently returned in the small hours, in which the fat man appeared a person of some importance. The place consisted of a large bare whitewashed building with a bar across one end and a house of sorts adjoining; it had been the warehouse and the manager's quarters of a disused wharf. It was clean, reasonably airy, and well lit. The people who patronised the place were mostly Englishmen, broken Englishmen, uncommunicative people, who treated the place as a sort of haven in which they were thankful to rest, when they could pay for the luxury. Basil Richardson was astonished that so many of them seemed to have a liking for chess, which they played very slowly, but with an almost passionate concentration. On that particular night there were, besides themselves, only two men in the bare room, both Englishmen. One of them had just come in. In answer to the Vat's nod and glance of interrogation he had muttered,

"Nothing doing," had shouted to the native serving boy for a drink, and had accepted the other man's invitation to play chess. It was then that Basil Richardson tackled his fat companion, with an air of patronage which he considered only due to himself.

"Look here, Robins," he asked, "you've puzzled me a good deal. What the deuce are you? What on earth do you do?"

The Vat stared at him; but he did not smile.

"Is it really possible," he asked, "that you have not observed that I am the proprietor of this establishment?"

But the boy had not realised it; moreover, he did not like the fat man's tone.

"Good God," he answered, "you make money out of a place of this sort!"

"The drink, as you know," the Vat replied smoothly, "is honest. The establishment, as you may know, does not provide a brothel. My patrons get their money's worth. And I make an honest living."

"But," the boy stammered, horrified, "you're white, you're a gentleman! A seedy, tumble-down pot-house in the native quarter! It's impossible. Why—oh, good Lord, man—why get mixed up with that?"

"Why?" the Vat repeated, shrugging his enormous shoulders. "That is what I had been hoping that you might be able to understand. We must get on with the lesson."

So, having heard from his father that the conditions of the tour were not to be varied, Basil Richardson went on, protesting, with the business. But he no longer visited the haunts where the sponging Europeans existed on half-castes. He saw Europeans a stage lower, when the half-castes would not look at them. He saw, amongst his own countrymen, vice, disease, squalor, suffering, and hopelessness which produced in him indignant disgust. He also saw certain of the attempts of these countrymen of his to obtain work; but he was so horrified at the men that he did little more than recognise that the attempts could not succeed. When one night he saw, in a foul drinking shop, an Englishmen who spoke in an educated voice, receive cringingly from a half-caste Portuguese seaman the wages of a pimp, he revolted. He swore that nothing on earth would induce him to go on with the sickening business; he would work his way back to Colombo if necessary.

Walking the quayside near the Strand Hotel, with the wonder of the tropic stars above him, he calmed down a little, and he asked a question.

"In all this morbid beastliness you've shown me," he declared, "I've noticed one thing. There are practically no old men. Where are they?"

"In all cities," the Vat explained, "the descent of men is monotonously similar. In the tropics it is a little quicker, that is all."

"You might at least answer me," the boy retorted.

"I have," the fat man told him patiently. "But since imagination is not your strong suit, I'll supply the words. They go to places we have not yet visited—prison, hospital, the cemetery, or the river. Where else should they go?"

Basil Richardson shuddered.

"All of them?" he muttered.

"Naturally not," the Vat told him. "Some of them follow other roads."

But he seemed to have seen something which interested him, for he led the way across the road and down a side street, halting in a patch of shadow and calling his companion's attention to a car which had stopped at a block of flats opposite. A young Englishman, carefully turned out in evening kit, helped a good-looking girl to alight. The girl had native blood in her. Basil Richardson snorted and walked away.

"It was," he declared indignantly, "quite unnecessary for you to show me that."

"Good," the Vat chuckled; "no need for obvious quotations about first steps then."

"None," Basil Richardson told him. "I'm through with it, done, finished. I'm all for a job of decent work."

"Splendid!" the fat man answered. "Then you know why I keep my seedy drinking shop."

"I'm damned if I do," the boy declared hotly. "I said decent work."

"A pity," the Vat commented, shaking his head. "But I thought that the understanding might be a little faulty. To-morrow we will start to have a look at the men who grow old."

"You may, I won't," said Basil Richardson, with great determination. "I'm going back to Colombo."

"Excellent," said the Vat. "Shows the right spirit. By the way, I'll take the clothes you have left at my place in payment for board and lodging. Good-night."

He waved a fat hand and turned away. Basil Richardson remained staring after him. But before the Vat had gone fifty yards the boy had caught him up, and was saying "Damn you" in a sulky tone.

The following morning, early, they left Rangoon in a small coasting vessel; but, as they passed down river, Basil Richardson's relief at leaving the city was counterbalanced by his indignation at the fact that they travelled second-class among natives and the meaner sort of half-caste bagmen. The fact that the south-west monsoon had begun to blow reduced him, however, directly they had dropped the Brig astern, to a condition bordering on coma. He did not think of anything but his own physical misery until the ship dropped anchor two days later in the Sin Byu River. At Sin Byu they stopped in a place which proclaimed itself a hotel: it was an ugly, fairly new bungalow, with a bar and French billiard table below and guest chambers, four of them, above. The furnishing of the bedrooms re-

minded Basil Richardson of the ghastly boarding-house in Rangoon, and he discovered that the place harboured cockroaches larger and more vicious than he had ever seen. When he indignantly asked why they could not stop at the Circuit House or even the Dak Bungalow, the Vat chuckled and answered, "Think. You really must begin to cultivate the habit."

During the three days which they spent in Sin Byu they saw a certain amount of one elderly Englishman, who called himself Smith, but they did not go near the European quarter or make the acquaintance of any of the other white residents. Smith lived in the town in a bungalow of native pattern in a crowded native street; the furnishing of his house was scanty and poor, hesitating somewhere between East and West. A youngish woman, who had some white blood in her, whom he referred to as his wife, managed his house; and there were children. Smith was a silent man, who looked emaciated and very ill. He obtained the means of existence by the occasional sale of scale plans for new buildings; and he talked, quite seriously, about competing for the designing of important public works in Rangoon. Having seen him accept the Vat's hospitality, it came to Basil Richardson like a flash of inspiration that the fellow would drink himself to death, but was prevented by sheer stark poverty and a watchful woman from accomplishing that aim. Like the men in the Vat's drinking-house in Rangoon, Smith appeared unaccountably fond of chess; he lamented the fact that the problems in the English papers which came into his hands were so excessively easy to solve, but he was almost excited about the acceptance by the 'Field' of a problem which he had himself composed. He talked about this problem, and how there would be very few solutions to it, for most of one evening. Basil Richardson could not understand this devotion to a game which had always seemed to him singularly lacking in everything but unnecessary complication. He did not take to Smith, who scarcely spoke to him; and he told the Vat that he could not make out why the fellow, who appeared to be an architect, didn't get a move on with his job and make enough to live decently in an ordinary way, and frequent the local club and mix with his fellows instead of fooling about with drink and doddering about chess. And the Vat replied impatiently—

"It scarcely seems credible that you are actually as obtuse as you appear to be."

From Sin Byu they went into the jungle, into vast tracts of forest of which only the fringes are worked or inhabited by man. Having resigned himself to going through with the fool business, and having recognised in the Vat a companion not without interest, Basil

Richardson put up with being treated like a child whenever he made what seemed to him apt comments on the people with whom they lived; and he tried to find diversion in a country that was wonderful and strange. But the climate and the Vat's unexpected energy were matters about which he complained continually. For it was intensely hot and abominably damp; it started to rain on the day when they left Sin Byu, and, except for an occasional hour, it went on raining, sometimes more heavily, sometimes less, but never lightly. Through this hot rain, in a rugged country of dripping trees, the Vat pursued an endless and apparently aimless trek, sometimes by boat along a flooded river, more often on foot along execrable tracks, stopping a night or two here and a night or two there with ageing and broken Englishmen, who existed in an extreme of squalor and poverty. In between such visits they would camp, but since they travelled light with very little baggage and only canvas cloths for shelter instead of tents, the discomfort was considerable. Basil Richardson, in spite of a very bitter resentment at such preposterous behaviour, came almost to admire the enormous and ageless person who, in soaking shirt and shorts, rolled along the jungle tracks discoursing with knowledge and animation of the ways of wild beasts, the flora of those vast forests, the taming of virgin places. But when, tired and out of temper, the boy demanded angrily why the devil, since that seemed the only possible object in the mad business, they couldn't discuss the outcast men whom they visited, the Vat would only grin and ignore the question.

Covering a wide area they visited five or six of these elderly outcast Englishmen, who lived in lonely places with half-caste women, and generally mongrel children, wholly and absolutely cut off from the life of their own kind, yet preserving some difference in their way of existence to that of the natives who were their neighbours. To Basil Richardson the lives of these men seemed horribly alike. Having visited them, his memory would hardly distinguish between them. Hopelessness, a resolute refusal to mix with their fellows, and an obstinate endeavour to obtain the means of a miserable existence by other ways than those to which they had been trained, seemed to him common to them all. Yet he did manage to remember two of them as individuals. A fellow whom the Vat called Sandy, who said things which indicated that he might at one time have been an accountant, who kept himself and his household from starvation by intermittent employment as a shikari. This man appeared to Basil Richardson not altogether sane; he spoke of tigers as though he understood their thoughts, and of elephants with love and reverence. The other fellow,

styling himself Jenkins, had obviously at one time practised as a doctor. He scraped a surface seam of tin for a very bare existence, but had an amazing collection of butterflies, about which he discoursed with pitiless pedantry. Both these men appeared comparatively content, and were different from the others in that they did not fuddle themselves regularly with toddy spirit.

Two days after they had left the collector of butterflies, Basil Richardson and the Vat superintended the pitching of their primitive camp on the banks of the main river; they were heading again for Sin Byu.

"Do you," the fat man asked, as the shelters were being erected, "draw any conclusions from what we have seen recently?"

"Plenty," the boy told him. "But it was really quite unnecessary for you to take me round to visit these friends of yours. I could have seen what you obviously want me to see without that."

The Vat beamed upon him.

"This," he said, "sounds like business at last. Get on with it, Solomon."

"Of course," Basil Richardson answered, warming to his explanation, "there are varying degrees of vice in all these fellows."

"But," the Vat objected, "that applies to all men—and women."

"I don't deny it," the boy declared. "But the vice does help, although I don't say that it's mainly that. Look at these fellows, Smith, Jenkins, and the man you called Sandy. They are all educated men, and had jobs or professions. They wouldn't stick to them, and now they're down and out. The East has no use for—rolling stones."

The Vat gazed at the boy in wonder; then he raised his fat arms to the streaming skies.

"God in heaven," he cried, "what a brain!"

And the next day, in spite of Basil Richardson's vehement protests, they turned away from Sin Byu again. The Vat insisted that there was something more to be seen.

"You must," he said, "have heard the expression 'Gone native.' You shall see it."

They went north-east across very rough country, toiling up and down steep slopes, having great difficulty and some danger in crossing even the smallest streams. In the early afternoon they reached a native village on the banks of a subsidiary river. There the headman of the village came out of his hut and spoke to the Vat. Basil Richardson noticed that the Vat received his message seriously; but he was too physically tired to pay much attention to the interview. He sat on a log, glad of the opportunity to rest, concerned with his own woes and his vile bodily discomfort. The headman was joined by other males of the village, and a selection of children of both sexes. The men talked and gesticulated, pointing up river, the children

stared. After interminable argument the Vat came over to where the boy sat on the log.

"The man I was taking you to see is dying," he stated. "He sent out a message asking me to come to him. I am going. But the floods are coming down dangerously, and I can only get a dug-out and one man to risk the journey. Unless you want to come with me you'll have to stop here until I get back—a matter of two or three days. The headman will put you up in his hut. But you won't get any one to take you down to Sin Byu while the water is rising at this rate. I warn you, if you decide to come, it will be hard work. Which will you do?"

Basil Richardson contemplated the prospect of three days, which might well be extended, in a native hut in company with people of whose language he did not understand one word, and the prospect did not please him.

"Hell," he answered angrily, "I suppose I've got to come with you."

And within an hour regretted the decision.

He laughed when the Vat lowered himself into the dug-out canoe, for the fat man seemed to overflow the sides of the craft and to be permanently wedged into it; but when he had seated himself in the bows of the crazy little boat, and a chattering Burman had squatted in the stern, and the torrent had taken hold of them, he felt no mirth. Water and the noise of water engulfed and frightened him. They did not attempt to make headway out in the main stream, where the swirling roaring race of water would have done what it pleased with them, where the masses of flotsam would have caught and crushed the dug-out: they laboured desperately at the paddles close inshore, where the water was comparatively quiet, making every use they could of any backwash or cross eddy in the rushing flood, navigating in great detours, sometimes a mile and more from the main channel, where the raging river had overtopped its bonds and spread over flat country. They toiled ceaselessly, and the rain poured down upon them so heavily and continuously that one or other of them was always engaged in baling out the canoe. His arms and back aching until he thought that his muscles must refuse their job, cramp in his legs causing him such pain that he muttered and cursed aloud, Basil Richardson was stung by the Vat's tongue when he slackened in his toil or attempted to ease his cramped limbs and so upset the sit of the boat; he was urged on with encouragement when he faltered through genuine fatigue. Exhaustion beginning to numb his faculties, he ceased to wonder at the amazing energy and endurance of the fat man behind him, but duly obeyed the commanding of his voice. Yet, when he found the canoe being steered pre-

cariously amongst the stems of giant trees, and learned that they were passing over the top of a gorge with the normal dry weather level of the stream seventy-five to eighty feet below them, he was roused to a spasm of acute alarm. He felt inclined to give up the hopeless struggle, to surrender to the fury of the waters which beat on him from above and sucked at him from below. He ceased to paddle; but the Vat's voice over his shoulder, abusive and violent, drove him to work again.

Then the night came down on them—a night of utter blackness, full of noise, the noise of water, rushing, roaring, gurgling, hissing. Soon after the coming of night there came a storm, which seemed to burst above them with an appalling and dreadful suddenness. The thunder deafened them, and long jagged streams of lightning made the struggle of land and water plainly visible in flickering spasms of unearthly light. A great tree ahead of them seemed suddenly clothed in fire, split down its whole length with a tearing scream so high and piercing that it transcended other noises, fell across the water, quivered, resisting, and was dragged onward by the boiling flood. The awful majesty, the stupendous violence of the scene brought Basil Richardson to a sort of dumb gaping wonder in which he moved mechanically. Then the Vat struck at the gunwale behind his back, and shouted in his ear, "Keep your eyes and wits about you. Look out for snakes or you'll be dead." So, seeing by the flicker of lightning glimpses of wicked swimming heads, the boy became the prey of a new terror.

After hours of a nightmare of labour, at what hour of that interminable night he never knew, they arrived at a small native village set well back from the channel of the river, but already half-submerged in water. To this little group of buildings they paddled their way on slack water amongst cocoa-nut palms and banana trees. They made the canoe fast to the corner post of one of the huts; and the native boatman immediately slipped overboard into four feet of water and disappeared in the dark. The hut was the usual native affair, set well off the ground on posts, walled with split bamboo on three sides, roofed with dhani leaves, opening on the fourth side to a sort of narrow verandah, without doors or windows, with a plaited bamboo floor. A hut of the poorest jungle sort, with the water lapping within six inches of the interior. A light burned in this hut. Basil Richardson crawled out of the canoe on to the narrow verandah, stretching his cramped and aching limbs. He thought himself exhausted; but he was thankful to have somewhere to lie and rest, some place used by man, somewhere a little removed from the violence and noise and horror of

the flood. Staggering with weariness, he followed the Vat into the interior of the hut, and the thought of rest went from him.

On a mat at the farther side of the hut an old man lay on his back, a faded red-and-black check lungi covering his loins and legs, his naked chest exposed, his head slightly raised on a little wooden stool. A Burmese woman squatted beside him; two brown, black-haired, bright-eyed children sat a little apart, wakeful, observant, alert, holding bamboo sticks in their hands. The old man had long grey hair, but his face was smooth. His eyes were shut, and he breathed very quickly with short panting gasps. In the dim light of the single candle, with the smell of that hut in his nostrils, Basil Richardson took the man for a native.

The wet streaming from him, the Vat moved across to the old man and knelt beside him.

"Tony," he said, clearly and softly.

The old man opened his eyes, stared at the fat man, and moved a hand which the other took between his. Making an effort he spoke, and his voice was that of an educated Englishman.

"Good of you to come, Peter," he whispered, and gasped at the exertion.

He lay again with closed eyes, while the Burmese woman adjusted the wooden stool so that his head should rest more easily. Then he collected himself once more.

"At last," he said.

And the Vat pressed his hand and replied—

"At last, old man."

The sick man did not speak again.

Basil Richardson was of that generation which has no familiarity with the spectacle of death. He was frightened; and he went to the narrow verandah and sat there, trying to resist the desire to look round into the interior of the hut. The storm had ceased as suddenly as it had begun; but the rain beat steadily and monotonously on the dhani roof, and the water was still rising. He could see the gleam of it quite close between the chinks in the plaited bamboo floor. Although the night was very hot and airless he felt chill and cold, his teeth chattered. The fear of dying, the loneliness of dying, overmastered him. But the Burmese woman came to him, and handed him a faded cotton lungi, and signed to him to put it on. While he took off his saturated shirt and shorts and wrapped the lungi about him, he looked into the interior of the hut. The bright-eyed children squatted wakeful and alert, beating with their sticks at any snakes which sought refuge from the flood; the Vat sat on the floor, his huge body girt with a lungi, smoking and watching; the old man seemed sunk in coma, his breathing quicker and more

noisy. The Burmese woman squatted beside the Englishman, watchful and ready. Basil Richardson saw only horror in that vision of a woman tending her dying mate.

He sat down again on the verandah, his head on his hands, staring in front of him, trying not to listen to that quick gasping breathing, jumping and shivering when the children's sticks smacked loudly. He was numb with fatigue and fear, and a great revulsion against the terror of that night. He could not think clearly, he did not wish to, about the meaning of the broken life that was ending. The circumstances of the death filled him with horror. It came to him that the man might have, when young, lived as he did; and there surged up in him something of a frenzy of good resolve.

Then above the beat of rain on the roof there came a rattling strangled gasp from the interior of the hut; and immediately, as though they awaited that signal, there began a chanting and sounding of instruments from unseen natives outside. At that accompaniment to the passage of a spirit Basil Richardson began to sob.

When he awoke to find the sun high in a cloudless sky, and the damp heat on the verandah where he lay intolerable, the recollection of the horror of the night flamed up in him; he was astonished to know that he had slept. Glancing with a curious qualm into the interior of the hut he saw that the mat on the farther side of the building was no longer occupied. The unknown Englishman had gone.

With the break in the rains the water had dropped several feet, but even in sunlight with the river not roused to the same degree of fury, Basil Richardson found travelling in a dug-out on the flood sufficiently alarming. They started back soon after he awoke, and they were carried forward swiftly by the current, not slowly by the toil of aching muscles. They got to the village where they had procured the canoe soon after mid-day, and, picking up their servants and baggage, changed the canoe for a sampan. That night they camped on the bank of the main river.

The Vat looked tired, but he made no complaint about fatigue as they journeyed all day under a pitiless sun in cramped unsheltered boats. He met his companion's bitter comments on the discomforts which they suffered with cheerful talk about the forests through which they passed. He made no reference at all to the previous night and its events. Once when they caught sight of a black cat bear, reared up and stretching itself against a tree trunk, he appeared unaffectedly excited and pleased, for he said that they were very rare. Basil Richardson, miserable with fatigue and discomfort, depressed by the memory of

horror, could not understand him.

That night, however, as they sat and smoked in the starlight, watching the tropic river rush past in flood, thoughts of orderliness and prosperity, of a well-regulated, sociable, comfortable life rose up in the boy, and compelled him to speak.

"My God," he declared, and his voice shook at the remembrance, "that poor devil's death was the most awful thing I have ever seen. I shall never forget it. Never."

The Vat pressed down the tobacco in his pipe with an immense forefinger before he answered.

"I don't suppose you will," he said. "But you ought to remind yourself of the fact that, last night, you observed nature being kind."

The boy stared at him and shuddered; but the fat man asked a question abruptly.

"Do you yet understand," he inquired, "why I keep my drinking shop?"

Basil Richardson frowned; he seemed genuinely perplexed, and there was no superiority in his tone.

"No. I don't," he replied. "I really don't. I can't see why you don't go in for something — something clean and decent and not sordid."

The Vat smiled and sighed.

"I was afraid you wouldn't," he said. "However, fear is sometimes an efficient substitute for understanding. But I would have preferred it the other way."

And he changed the subject of their talk deliberately.

Four days later Basil Richardson stood on the deck of the coasting steamer heading for Rangoon. He was much occupied with consideration of the pleasantness which a rich and prosperous planter ought to find in life. The break in the monsoon held; he was not sea-sick; and the conviction that he was now able to perceive the serious purpose of living gave him satisfaction. The Vat's good-tempered voice disturbed a vision of domestic comfort.

"Picturing the fat dividends?"

Basil Richardson smiled.

"That and other rewards," he laughed.

"Never forget me," the Vat told him; and he spoke with complete seriousness.

"You?" the boy said, astonished.

"The purpose of our little trip," the fat man explained, "was to enable you to understand me. I had to show you quite a lot of unpleasant things to make you understand. But I fancy that you do now."

"I don't in the least know what you are driving at," Basil Richardson declared obstinately; and he flushed.

"Don't fancy that I am going to burden you with confidences," the Vat insisted. "We'll keep to plain question and answer. You have seen something of me. Do I answer reasonably to the description of an educated English gentle-

man without unpleasant vices and of a moderately kindly disposition ? "

"You do."

The boy appeared uncomfortable and embarrassed, but there was conviction in his reply.

"Being all that, is there the slightest chance of my being faced with anything but rebuff if I attempted to mix with my own kind in the East on level terms ? Is there ? "

The boy was silent.

"Is there ? "

"No. But . . ."

The Vat held up his hand, chuckling.

"We'll cut out the palaver," he said, "so that brings us to the wise consideration that it's devilish easy to get marked out here and quite useless to attempt to remove the mark. You were heading for the mark before you came to know me, weren't you ? "

The boy began to stammer something which sounded like thanks ; but the fat man interrupted him.

"My seventeen—or it may be eighteen—stone body requires food, a good deal of it," he declared, "a roof to shelter it, and much fabric of one sort and another to drape its ugliness. Remembering the circumstances of certain of my friends, do you still find it impossible to understand why I stick to my drinking shop which gives me these necessaries of life, and, beyond the necessaries, the means to sit occasionally in the G.O.H. and observe mankind — while I wait ? " . . .

Basil Richardson did not reply directly to the question, nor did he ask for any explanation of the last three words ; but he spoke with feeling.

"I'm no good at thanks," he said, "but I'll tell you one thing : there will always be a welcome for you in my house, Robins."

. . . . . .

Some two years later an outward - bound liner slowed down outside the harbour of Colombo awaiting the signal to enter. Passengers hurried up from their dinners and lined the rails, inhaling the smell of land, identifying buildings, comparing hotels, making plans for amusement ashore. A little apart from the crowd Basil Richardson stood with his wife, a slender, good-looking, well-turned-out girl, with a hint of the born manager of men showing through her adolescence. She was not the daughter of a general—her father was a colonial governor,—but the marriage had been considered satisfactory by both families. As the vessel moved sedately between the pierheads into the smooth mirror of the harbour, with its noisy nocturnal activity and its innumerable reflected lights, the more weak-minded and inexperienced passengers began to show signs of wanting to rush wildly. Basil Richardson, smiling, drew his wife's attention to these flustered people.

"Funny the way some of

them always lose their heads," he laughed. "But I've squared up everything on board, and arranged for a launch to take us ashore. I've made out a list of the baggage, so that my fellows will know exactly what they've got to bring. We can go off directly the Customs people have arrived."

The girl put her hand on his arm; she seemed very content.

"You're awfully business-like and competent, Basil," she told him.

"Got to be in these days of competition," her husband declared. "We are doing pretty well as it is, but before very long you are going to be the wife of the richest planter in the island."

And as they crossed the harbour in the launch he talked eagerly of his plans and ambitions and of the improvements in their house which she should superintend, only interrupting the forecast of prosperity to ask her whether she would mind stopping for a few minutes at the G.O.H. to have a drink with his father's friend, Hawkins, an established ritual which the old fellow would expect. A car was waiting for them at the entrance to the jetty, and Basil Richardson insisted that they should drive the short way to the G.O.H.

He followed his wife into the hotel, chatting with animation, pleasantly conscious that the lady of his choice did him credit and would be justly admired. But just inside the door he shied like a frightened horse, and hurriedly conducted the girl to a chair at the farther end of the lounge.

"Who," his wife asked as she sat down, "was that funny-looking fat man near the door? I thought he seemed to know you."

Basil Richardson frowned.

"A fellow named Robins," he answered, "a beachcomber, utter waster, the sort one has to avoid, darling. Once I had to see a good deal of him on business. I was rather afraid he would presume on it. Thank heaven, he hasn't."

The Vat, overflowing the cane chair in which he sat commanding the entrance to the hotel, his podgy hands on the arms, his short legs stretched out, his clothes clean but threadbare, a small untasted whisky-and-soda beside him on a table, had been talking to Hawkins as Basil Richardson and his wife came in. The way in which the boy had rushed the girl away had been very obvious. Hawkins turned a snort into a sentence.

"Must go and greet the lady," he declared. "She looks capable as well as ornamental."

The Vat's eyes twinkled amongst wrinkles and pouches.

"Eminently satisfactory," he said. "The evidence of a permanent cure is conclusive."

He touched his drink with his lips, nodded to Hawkins, and turned to watch the entry of new arrivals with every appearance of interest.

BREAKING TRAIL IN THE SUB-ARCTIC.

THE STORY OF A WINTER PATROL WITH DOGS IN THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE.

BY CAPTAIN H. L. FRASER.

I.

THE work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, better known by its old name of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, has now entered upon a new phase: with the advance of civilisation and the taking over of the policing of the Prairie Provinces by the various Provincial Forces, the sphere of usefulness of this famous old force has been transferred to the Far North. Year by year the Northern detachments in the Eastern and Western Arctic move out farther from railhead and nearer to the Pole, and it is now a very small "jump" from the detachment on Ellesmere Island to the Pole itself.

I have headed this account of my patrol "Breaking Trail in the Sub-Arctic" for two reasons: the first, that owing to the patrol being compelled to start off in the early winter before the snow had had time to settle down, and on account of an unusually heavy snowfall, it was a case of breaking trail on snowshoes almost the whole way; and the second, that part of the journey—the portion between the Great Bear Lake and the chain of small lakes north of Fort Rae—was across a piece of country over which no white man had previously travelled.

In the early summer of 1924 I was transferred to G Division, which stretches from Edmonton in Alberta to bleak wind-swept Herschell Island in the Arctic Ocean. Railhead is at Waterways on the Athabasca River. Beyond stretches one vast forest for hundreds of miles, split up by a network of rivers and lakes, the main route to the Arctic being *viâ* the Athabasca and Slave Rivers to the Great Slave Lake, and down the Mackenzie River to the Arctic Ocean.

On the Slave River, about 170 miles south of the Great Slave Lake, is Fort Smith, the headquarters of the subdistrict to which I was posted, and the point from which I set out.

Some of the difficulties which a winter patrol with dogs has to contend with are: bad weather and trail conditions, shortness of mid-winter days in the Arctic, accidents to men and dogs, loss of direction, and starvation.

The sleigh driver can only ride on the sleigh downhill or under perfect weather and trail conditions. The sleigh carries food for men and dogs, axe, cooking utensils, blankets, &c., and this is a big enough load without his adding his own weight to it. As he gets farther from the beaten track, the points at which he can replenish his food supply become wider apart, and he can only take barely enough food for himself and dogs to carry him through under normal conditions. Meeting inclement weather, storms or deep snow, he is delayed; his food supply runs short, and eventually gives out; and, added to the delay caused by the storm, his progress becomes daily slower on account of the weakness of the dogs. In very low temperatures there is danger of frost-bite, and he has always to guard against snow-blindness. Camps should be made in daylight, because, on reaching a camping ground, he has still to cut the wood for the night's camp fire, and in mid-winter this gives him a very short travelling day. If the snow is deep, he may have to break trail twice before the dogs are able to pull the loaded sleigh through it. A day's journey will therefore vary from three or four to fifty or sixty miles.

There are many ways in which accidents occur, and probably there is no doctor within hundreds of miles. Dogs go lame and sick, and every dog taken out of harness slows up the train but continues to eat his share of the food. Whilst it is almost impossible to lose the way on the main rivers, it is comparatively easy to do so once one leaves them and takes to the bush. A combination of some of these bad "breaks" means a tightening of the belt and striking out for the nearest human habitation; and, if this be too far distant, starvation and death.

The ill-fated Fitzgerald patrol is a striking example of what may happen even to experienced northern travellers, as they were. In December 1910 Inspector Fitzgerald left Fort Macpherson on the Peel River for Dawson in the Yukon—a distance of about 750 miles, — with Constables Taylor and Kinney, and ex-Constable Carter as guide. They took with them the mail from Northern posts on the Mackenzie, and this, coupled with the fact that the Rocky Mountains had to be crossed —doubling up the dogs to pull the loads up the worst slopes,— meant that they were only able to take the bare amount of food to get them through under average travelling conditions. It was the old gamble with the elements which Northern policemen have had to take time and again.

All went well until the party arrived at the foothills—about 375 miles from Fort Macpherson—when Carter lost his way. He was searching for the pass

through the mountains, but every valley looked alike, and a week was wasted, with food growing more scarce. The food ran out, and Fitzgerald reluctantly decided to turn back and try to make Fort Macpherson. They started back, eating their dogs as they went, and everything began to go wrong.

They encountered storms, overflow on the river and deep going, were badly frost-bitten, and were only able to make a very few miles a day. Their non-arrival at Dawson led to a relief patrol being sent out under Corporal Dempster, and they were all found dead within a few miles of Fort Macpherson with "their stomachs flattened to their spines."

The story of the patrol's heroic efforts to carry out the duty entrusted to it until no hope of reaching its goal remained, is the most pathetic and the most glorious page in the annals of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, but is also an illustration of the ease with which the best arranged trip, undertaken by men who know their job, may become a disaster.

II.

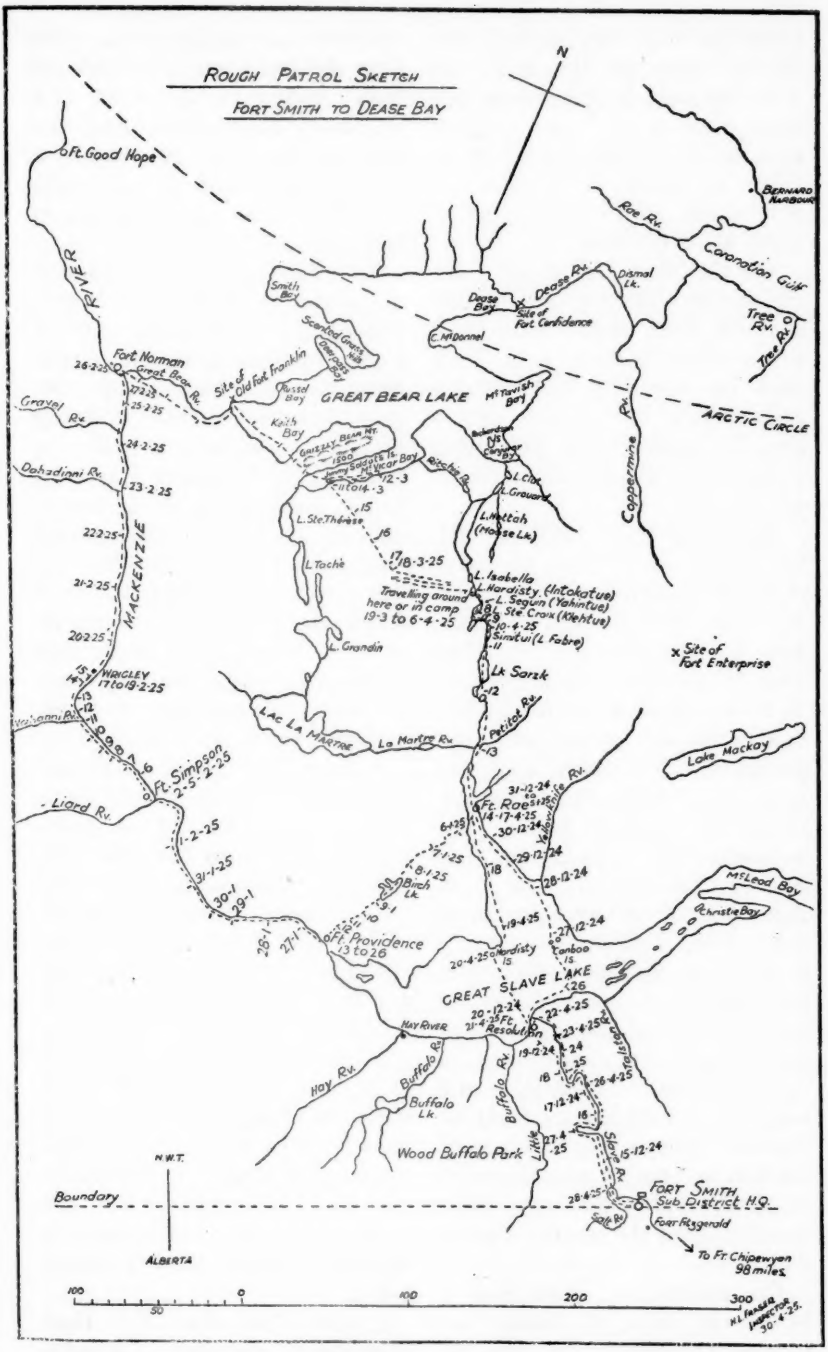
Tree River Detachment is an isolated post in Coronation Gulf on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

The mail from this post is carried west along the Arctic coast to the mouth of the Mackenzie River, and then up that river hundreds of miles; it may be a year or more before it reaches the outside. The authorities were anxious to ascertain whether it would be practicable, with a police post established at Dease Bay in the north-east corner of Great Bear Lake, to carry this mail across country from Tree River to Dease Bay, from Dease Bay to Fort Rae on the north arm of the Great Slave Lake, across the lake to Fort Resolution, and then out by the ordinary route to Edmonton.

In the early winter of 1924 I received orders to make a patrol from Fort Smith *viâ* Fort Resolution, Fort Rae, and a chain of lakes north of Fort Rae, to Dease Bay, and report on the feasibility of the route, the best points to put a couple of shelter cabins *en route*, the possibilities of getting lumber locally for building purposes, &c.

With two trains of dogs I left Fort Smith on the 15th December for Fort Resolution, the first "leg" of a trip that was destined to run into a journey of over 2200 miles, from which I did not get back until the 29th April.

As an earnest of what the weather had in store for us, the glass dropped to fifty-six below zero for our start. The trip to Fort Resolution was un-


ROUGH PATROL SKETCH
FORT SMITH TO DEASE BAY
N
Ft. Good Hope
MACKENZIE RIVER
Fort Norman
Great Bear R.
Site of Old Fort Franklin
GREAT BEAR LAKE
Mt Tavish Bay
Keith Bay
Scented Grass Hills
Camsell Bay
Bernard Harbour
Rae R.
Coronation Gulf
Dease R.
Dease Bay
Site of Fort Confidence
Dismal Lk.
Tree R.
C. McDonnell
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Coppermine R.
Smith Bay
Gravel R.
Dahadinni R.
L. Ste Therese
L. Tochà
L. Isabella
Nardisty (Intakatue)
L. Segun (Yahintue)
Ste Croix (Kehtue)
Simtui (L Fabre)
Travelling around here or in camp 19-3 to 6-4-25
L. Grandin
Lk Sarzk
Site of Fort Enterprise
WRIGLEY
17 to 19-2-25
Wrigley R.
ROAD to Ft. Simpson
2-5-2-25
Liard R.
LAC LA MARTRE
La Martre R.
Petitot R.
Lake Mackay
Ft. Rae
Rae R.
McLeod Bay
Christie Bay
Ft. Providence
13 to 26
Birch Lk.
GREAT SLAVE LAKE
HAY RIVER
Ft. Resolution
Hay R.
Buffalo R.
Buffalo Lk.
Buffalo R.
Little Buffalo R.
Wood Buffalo Park
Slave R.
Boundary
N.W.T.
ALBERTA
FORT SMITH
Sub District H.Q.
Salt R.
Fort Fitzgerald
To Ft Chipewyan
98 miles
100 0 100 200 300
50
H.L. Fraser
Inspector
30-4-25.

eventful, and we reached the fort at noon on the 19th. It was the first long journey my dogs had made that winter, and, as they had a big trip in front of them, I decided to rest them at Fort Resolution until after Christmas.

On the 26th December I set out on the second stage. I had sent the Fort Smith train back some days before, and took with me my own train—these dogs made the entire trip—and the police train belonging to the Fort Resolution detachment.

In spring it is possible, with the longer days and an early start, to make a direct crossing of Great Slave Lake, but in winter one uses the islands to the north-west of Fort Resolution to break the cold, miserable and wind-swept journey. The next day was typical. With the thermometer at thirty below and a north-west wind, we left Stoney Island at 7.30 A.M. A good hard surface, but rough ice at first. Drifting snow made it difficult to keep direction, and we went some miles off our course to the east. For noon spell we made one of the Cariboo Islands, and camped at 3.30 P.M. on Outpost Island. There was very little shelter, and only a small amount of driftwood. No one slept much during the night—thirty-five miles.

On arrival at Fort Rae I began at once to make inquiries regarding the trip to Dease Bay, and found that, without any shelter cabins, the long distance without trails to haul heavy loads over the unusually deep snow, and the impossibility of procuring a guide, the patrol as originally intended was next door to impossible.

I decided therefore to change my plans, to go to Fort Providence, and thence, by way of Fort Norman and the Great Bear River, to Dease Bay. On arrival there I should probably be able to obtain a guide to take me to Conjuror Bay and Lake Hottah, and I would endeavour to make the patrol from the other end—that is, the north. I figured I would reach the bush country north of Fort Rae in the beginning of March, when the days are longer, the weather warmer, and the trails more settled.

I found out later that my food cache, which should have crossed the Great Bear Lake to Dease Bay in the autumn, had failed to get across owing to continuous storms. In other words, had I attempted to go through by the route originally planned, I would have arrived at Dease Bay (if I had ever got there at all) with tired-out dogs, and found myself faced with the alternative of turning back to Fort Rae without food for men or dogs, or of making for the little fishery on the west shore of the lake, a distance of about three hundred miles.

I left Fort Rae for Fort Providence on 6th January. This was quite a hard trip.

From Old Fort Rae to Birch Lake no one had been over the trail this winter. There was no bottom to it, and the dogs went right out of sight in the deep snow. The days were very short, and, as we were trying to make good time, it meant making camps in the dark every night. This is a very desolate bit of country with a good deal of muskeg. We met no one between Fort Rae and Fort Providence.

At Fort Providence on the Mackenzie River I picked up Constable Logel, whom I intended taking all the way with me, and later, near Wrigley, I hired John Bowen. This completed the small party of three.

To give space for a description of the journey farther off the beaten track in which I crossed a piece of country where no white man had been before, I will quote from my notes of the trip down the Mackenzie River :—

> "30/1/25. Fifty-five below. Very cold head wind. . . . Left at 10 A.M., made no fire, and camped at Head of the Line at 3.30 P.M. Rough ice most of the way. . . . Constable Logel froze one foot slightly, and I had both ears and face touched —17 miles."

This was one of the most trying days; added to the intense cold, the sleighs kept upsetting on the "hummocky" ice, and occasionally got wedged between two great chunks. During this day and the two following days the glass never rose above fifty below zero.

> "9/2/25. Forty below. S. wind. Left camp at 9 A.M. Snow very deep, and dogs showed signs of playing out. I went ahead with the forerunner to double-break the trail. My 200 lb. broke the trail very successfully, but I was quite beat by the time I gave the order to camp, I was sinking so much in the snow even with snow-shoes —16 miles.
>
> "15/2/25. Forty-five below. Strong N. wind. Left camp at 7 A.M. Spelled at Frank Adam's (wood-cutter). Some rough ice and quite a lot of overflow after leaving Adam's."

Had I known what I was running into, I would have stayed at Adam's. The wind rose to a gale that we could hardly walk against, and one could see no distance on account of drifting snow, which covered up the tracks of the sleigh in front as soon as made. This was the coldest day I have ever experienced, though we had many actually lower temperatures on the trip. If any one wants to know the height of misery, I advise him to face a gale of wind such as this at 45° below zero, but I also advise him to arrange it so that he doesn't have to continue the experiment for more than five minutes. It blows through skin clothing and lined mitts as if one did not have

them on. I was driving my dogs behind Constable Logel's train. At about 5 P.M., whilst I was fixing a snow-shoe, my dogs got away from me, and I lost the trail. At about 6 P.M., as it was getting dark, and as I had frozen an eye and couldn't see where I was going, I decided to take shelter in the bush on the river bank, and wait until the wind should drop. My axe was away on the sleigh, and I had only half a dozen matches left. I managed to collect enough dry wood to make a fire, but my fingers were so numbed that I dropped three matches, and the others went out in the gale. I remained where I was until 2.30 A.M., stamping my feet and trying to keep circulation in them. Then I decided that it would be better to push on towards Wrigley, which was fifteen miles ahead, than to run the chance of falling asleep where I was. I had already gone to sleep three times standing up and had fallen over and wakened, and did not dare to sit down or lean against anything for fear of sleeping. At about 3 A.M. I ran into Constable Logel and Bowen, who were out looking for me, and was taken to the latter's shack. I had frozen one eye, both feet, and the fingers and wrist of one hand, but none of these injuries were of such a nature as to prevent my going on—23 miles.

In climbing the rocky bank of the river I had broken one snow-shoe, so had discarded both. When I was fortunate enough to meet Logel and Bowen, I was crossing the river to the far side, sinking to the knees in the deep snow at every step. I was done, and could never have made Wrigley.

We arrived at Fort Norman on the 25th of February, and, after resting the dogs for a day and a half, left for the Little Fishery on Great Bear Lake, which we reached on the 3rd of March. At this point I was forced to make a second change in my route. I discovered that my food cache had not succeeded in getting across the lake to Dease Bay, so decided to make for the south shore of the lake, and follow it until I came to a river, to which I later gave the name of Ritchie River, and to follow this river into the chain of lakes leading to Fort Rae.

We now left the beaten track and struck into very little known country.

At the Fishery I met Mr Boland and Mr Harrison. The former confirmed Inspector Eames's statement that I could hope to get no supplies at Dease Bay, and put an end to any idea I still had of pushing through. Mr Harrison told me that I should find Indians camped on Grizzly Bear Mountain Portage or in M'Vicar Bay, and that the chief there would most certainly fix me up with a man to put me on the right road to Fort Rae. I decided therefore to follow the south shore of Keith Bay, crossing the neck of land shown

on the map as Grizzly Bear Mountain Portage, then along the south shore of M'Vicar Bay to the river which leads into Lake Hottah (locally known as Moose Lake). From here it is a matter of following the chain of lakes south until one meets the Marion River. I was unable to get a guide at the Fishery, as there were no men there, so, hoping to get a guide from the chief in M'Vicar Bay, I left the Fishery on 5th March. Both Mr Boland and Mr Harrison urged me to take more food and dog-feed for the trip, saying that I had not enough, but I decided not to do so. They both had strong dogs, accustomed to carry 500 to 700 lb. on the lake; but I considered that our dogs would get nowhere if I loaded the sleighs any more, and decided that I had to take a chance of going short.

The best part of two days was wasted in looking for Grizzly Bear Mountain Portage, owing to the poor directions I received from the trapper Schillenberger, whom I met on the south shore of Keith Bay. On the 9th and 10th March I crossed Grizzly Bear Mountain by an Indian trail. This was quite a long uphill climb on the north side, and a short steep descent on the south. I had been told by Harrison that there would be Indians camped either on the portage or near the south end of it, and was very disappointed at not finding them. The two days lost looking for the portage had reduced my small supply of food, and I couldn't afford to look for Indians at the western end of M'Vicar Bay, with the possibility of not finding them, so had to make up my mind to head for the river leading from M'Vicar Bay to Lake Hottah, trusting to find the portages out of the lakes without too much delay. Starting to cross M'Vicar Bay in a south-easterly direction, I saw what I took to be a column of smoke to the south-west, and, heading for it, found it to be a camp of Slave Indians. The men were all away hunting, and none of the women were able to speak either English or French, which is unusual in these days when so many of the Indian girls are educated at the Roman Catholic Mission schools, and was a clear sign that we were pretty far from the beaten track.

Travelling thirty miles on the following day, we reached a long bay, running in about five miles, and, thinking it possible that the Ritchie River might lead from the end of it, I left the rest in camp and set out to explore. I had no luck, but, on my return at about 9 A.M., found a messenger from the Indian camp.

It turned out that the Slave Chief, Jimmy Soldat, had returned from his hunting trip late the night before, and, having heard that we were bound for Fort Rae and of the route we proposed taking, had sent off this Indian with dogs

at 2 A.M. to advise us not to go by this route, but to return to his camp, which we did.

I learnt from Jimmy Soldat that the Ritchie River was about ninety miles long, with deep snow and a good deal of overflow, and was, in places, almost impassable. He also told me that he had happened to run into a party of Dogrib Indians from Fort Rae, one of whom would probably guide us to the Fort.

It is interesting to note how little two neighbouring bands of Indians may come into contact with one another. The Chief said that prior to meeting these men near his trap-line a few days previously, he had not seen a Dogrib Indian for twelve years. Some of the Dogrib band who trap on the Barren Lands are cheek by jowl with the Esquimaux, but avoid them when they sight them; I believe that they are scared of the Esquimaux. I got one of the band, who knew where these Dogribs were encamped, to guide me to them, and early on the morning of the 10th I reached the camp of the Dogrib Chief Tatsee. His boys were away, but were due back the same evening, and he promised me that, if I waited the day at his camp, he would get one of them to put me on the right road to Lake Hardisty. They could not take me all the way to my cache on Lake Yahintuë, as he wanted them back to help to move the family into Fort Rae for Easter.

These Indians were living in a much rougher fashion than our late hosts of the Slave band. In the place of a big tent with two stoves they had a skin teepee, and, while the former had butter, flour, sugar, and other foodstuffs hauled from the Hudson Bay Company's store at Fort Norman, the Dogribs were living on straight deer meat and nothing else. Of this they had plenty, having lately killed two moose and seven cariboo. Eventually both the Chief's sons came with me as far as their fish cache, a matter of about two days and a half.

The trail from the cache was a ten weeks' old one, easy to follow in the bush, but very hard to find across the open muskegs. On the third day after the Indians had turned back, I arrived at a biggish lake which was not brushed at all. (By "brushing" is meant the putting of a small branch of spruce in the snow about twenty or thirty yards on to a lake opposite to where the trail arrives at it, another—possibly two or three if it is a big lake—in the centre to show direction, and a last a few yards from the far edge to show where the trail leaves.) This lake was surrounded by hills, and there was no indication as to where the trail should leave it.

Part of the 23rd and the whole of the 24th was spent in looking for signs of a trail on the far side of the lake. We separated, climbed the hills, and went back three or four

miles from the lake shore, but had no success. The snow was very deep, and it took one a long time to go any distance.

From what the guides had told me we should now have been about a day from our cache on Lake Yahintuë; there was only one night's dog-feed left, and very little food for ourselves. It was heart-breaking to have to turn back when one knew that we were so near to our food cache, and, had I been by myself, I would have been inclined to push on east and try to strike the lake. But with two other members of the party and ten worn-out dogs to consider, I did not feel justified in taking the risk, and decided to turn back as far as the fish cache where the guides had left us, there to wait for the Dogribs, who must be coming during the next day or so if they meant to make Fort Rae for Easter. I could not tell how far I had come on the right trail, but knew that the fish cache must be on the road in.

My first intention, after returning to the cache, was to send Logel back with an empty sleigh to the Indians' camp, meanwhile taking enough fish from the cache to keep ourselves and the dogs from starving, repaying this to the Indians on arrival at our cache. "Robbing" a cache is a very serious matter in a country where men's lives may depend on finding the food where it has been cached, but I had no hesitation in doing so in this case, as I knew that these Indians had plenty of meat.

But, during the days on which we were returning to the cache, a strong wind blew with a certain amount of snow, and I was afraid that the trail would be so covered up that Logel might not be able to find his way back, so decided to keep the party at the cache to await the coming of the Indians, which, I reckoned, could not be more than two or three days at most.

By the time we reached the cache, there was no dog-feed left, and, for ourselves, a small bag of rice only. The Indians seemed to be in no hurry to get into the Fort, and we waited for them from the 26th March until the morning of the 5th April.

"31/3/25. Zero. Snowing off and on all day. In camp waiting for Dogribs. I cannot understand why they have not arrived yet. We are practically out of food. We ran out of everything but rice a week ago, and have been living on rice and water for a week. Now we have only enough rice for one more meal, and will then have to rely on the fish we can catch for the dogs and ourselves. Logel and Bowen visited the net to-day, but only got three fish. (We gave these to the dogs, who were in worse shape than ourselves). I think it is fairly certain that the Indians will be here to-morrow."

"2/4/25. Fifteen above . . . One fish in the net again to-day. Three rabbits caught in my snares were eaten by the dogs—we had no chains to fasten them up. . . . Cannot understand why the Indians do not come. Constable Logel is anxious to make an attempt to reach their camp, so am sending him off to-morrow."

My own fear was that the Indians had gone by another route, but I was not anxious to pass this thought on to the others. If this had happened, there was no hope for us.

At about 2 P.M. on 4th April, while we were visiting the nets, I saw five dog trains crossing the lake, and, on returning to camp, found that Constable Logel had met the Indians about twenty miles out, and returned with them. The Chief gave us what food he could spare — about six lb. of flour and a small piece of very salt pork. He was unable to let us have any dog-feed, as he was short himself. As a matter of fact, he had more meat than he admitted. Every time I pulled out a dollar bill he produced a bit of half-dried moose meat.

On the 7th we again reached the lake at which we had spent two days hunting for the trail. Travelling to the east end, we climbed up the precipitous side of a high bare hill. The sleighs had to be helped up by much pulling and pushing, and to be held back on the far side. When I saw where the trail led, I did not blame myself for having lost it. There was no brush on the lake to show where the trail should leave it, and no signs of any trail on the side of the hill. It was the last place where one would expect the trail to lead.

On the following afternoon we struck Intokatuë (Lake Hardisty), travelled down it to the south end, and made a portage into Yahintuë (Lake Seguin). On the next portage, between Yahintuë and Tehtuë, I found Cache C., the food supply which had been brought out by Constable Clarke from Fort Rae. After cooking beans, &c., and loading up the sleighs at this cache, we pushed on towards Fort Rae, leaving the Indians to follow in their own more leisurely fashion.

As we neared Fort Rae the trails of various parties of Indians who had recently come into the Fort for Easter joined our trail from time to time, each one making our trail harder and better, and on the 14th we made forty-nine miles, reaching Fort Rae at 7 P.M.—not a bad effort for half-starved and trail-weary dogs.

Although the dogs badly needed a rest, I did not dare to stay too long at Fort Rae. I was still nearly five hundred miles from home, it was getting very late in the season, and I was afraid that the ice on the river might go out before I reached Fort Smith. So, on the 18th, I left again for Fort Resolution.

On this part of the trip we encountered ideal conditions, the last day of the trip to Fort Resolution being typical of the whole journey on the lake.

> "21/4/25. Twenty-three above. Left Hardisty Island at 4.30 A.M. This was an ideal day for travelling—no sun and a cold north wind which kept the lake from thawing. A hard surface. Made very good time, and two fires, arriving at Fort Resolution at 7.30 P.M.—60 miles."

On arrival at Fort Resolution, both Corporal Hall, who had come with me from Fort Rae, and Bowen were suffering from snow blindness, the latter badly, and I had to leave both behind at the Fort. Here Logel also left me, striking off north for his own detachment at Fort Providence.

Hearing that the river was thawing fast, I decided to rest the dogs one day only, and at 4.30 A.M. I left on the last stage of my journey to Fort Smith. A thaw had set in, and we were in difficulties from the start. I was told that it would be impossible to cross by the usual winter portage (to the Slave River) owing to water on it, and that the best way would be by Michel's portage. I started to cross Michel's portage, found it impossible, and had to turn back to the Fort. I then headed for the Slave River *viâ* the Sawmill Snye, a much longer way. The Sawmill Snye was full of water, and it was very hard pulling through it. The Slave River was not much better.

During this portion of the trip we had to camp by day and travel during the second half of the nights and the early mornings, when the water on the ice had had a chance to freeze. Later it thawed fast, and on three or four occasions when crossing from the shore to the ice in the centre of the river, the dogs were off their feet in the water and the sleigh floating.

On the 26th April we spelled at Ancoin's at Landry River at noon, and had to cross to his shack from the centre of the river by canoe, swimming the dogs across. Here the mail-man was camped with his dogs. He had been here about four days, and had decided not to go any farther. Two days later we could not get off the ice owing to deep water by the banks, and made a fire on the ice, using our "grub" box and a bit of candle as fuel to boil the kettle. We reached Gravel Point at 4 P.M., and I found we could get no farther by river. Below this point the river was open, and leaving the sleighs here, I walked over the bush trail to Fort Smith on the following morning.

The snow was all gone, and there was a lot of water on the trail—a couple of times it meant wading over the knees. Our friends in Fort Smith had given up all hope of our arrival

before the boats should start running in the spring, and were very much astonished to see us turn up.

The distance travelled on this patrol was 2207 miles, the average temperature through December, January, and February was 30° below zero, and we were pretty short of food for some weeks until it eventually ran out altogether. At one point it looked as if we were not going to pull through.

The country to the south of the Great Bear Lake is at present a blank spot on the map, and is likely to remain so for some time. It is a difficult matter to carry enough dog-feed to get one through in winter, and while there are a great number of small lakes, there is not, as far as I was able to ascertain, a river route that one could follow in summer.

Jimmy Soldat, the Slave Chief, has wintered on the south shore of the Great Bear Lake for a great number of years. He told me that no white man had ever travelled by the route I took, though two (I presumed that he meant Bell and Preble) had come through from Fort Rae to the Great Bear Lake by way of the Camsell River, the way I originally intended to come—this, of course, by canoe in the summer months.

The Indians, in their various stages of semi-civilisation, were a source of never-ending interest. Round the settlements they have been spoilt by too much coddling, and look to the Government to help them out of all their difficulties, but, farther afield, one meets some very fine characters amongst them, such as Jimmy Soldat.

At Gravel River, south of Fort Norman, I stopped one night at the camp of an Indian of the name of Carcajee. He had a large family, and there must have been a dozen of us sleeping in the tent. In the morning he handed me a bowl of water to wash in, and, when I had finished doing so, the bowl passed round the whole circle. When it got back to Carcajee's youngest on my left, the water was as black as the proverbial boot. I was glad that I had had the first "go" at it and not the last. This Carcajee had three grown-up daughters, all of whom had their own trap lines, and were probably better trappers than their father; the family, in consequence, was in pretty affluent circumstances.

The majority of Indians through this country are Roman Catholics, though there is a thriving Anglican Mission at Hay River on the Great Bear Lake, and are very conscientious about religious observances. They travel hundreds of miles to attend the Masses at the various settlements at Christmas and Easter.

I was surprised at the scarcity of animal life, especially in the country immediately to the south of Great Bear Lake. While one does not expect to see much in the shape of deer

when travelling with ten dogs, we saw very few tracks. On the Mackenzie River there was the occasional moose and caribou track. I had one long shot at a moose myself, but, after leaving the river and taking to the bush, we came across very few tracks indeed. During the last three days of the trip—on the Slave River—I saw thousands of geese and ducks flying north. On one open pool in the river there must have been several hundreds of duck.

With all its hardships there is a fascination about a long trip with dogs. One gets to know the disposition and peculiarities of each dog, and becomes very attached to them. Looking back after a lapse of two and a half years, I sometimes picture again some of our camp fires just south of the circle, and I often feel that it would be good to shake the dust of the cities from my feet and return to that vast lone land where "the mountains are nameless and the rivers all run God knows where."

BUSRAWI OF MANY WILES.

BY C. LEONARD WOOLLEY.

BEFORE 11th November 1919, when the British forces evacuated Syria, I had been acting as political officer in the north, with Jerablus as my base; in less than a month after the evacuation I was back there, but this time as a civilian, to resume the British Museum excavations on the site of ancient Carchemish, interrupted by the years of war. With me was Guy, and Hamoudi of Jerablus was, as before the war, my foreman in charge. Our programme was to carry out during the winter such minor pieces of digging as weather would allow, and with the beginning of spring to embark on the big job of working out the whole system of the city's defences. We carried out our programme, but in the face of greater difficulties than we had ever expected.

I had anticipated trouble. Long before we left Syria clouds were gathering in the north. The long delay in the formulating of peace terms for Turkey, the disastrous occupation of Smyrna by the Greeks, the Nationalist campaign organised by Mustapha Kemel against the Turkish Government of the day, all gave promise of trouble. In Syria itself the coming of the French was unwelcome to the Moslems, partly because they were expected to favour unduly the Christian minority of the population, partly thanks to propaganda put about by Algerian exiles in Damascus, partly, too, because a vague Nationalism was beginning to ask why Syria should not have that "self-determination" which means the licence for every man to plunder his neighbour. When the French did come, their obvious inferiority both in numbers and in military equipment to the forces which they replaced was an encouragement to violence which agitators were not slow to use. Of course, I knew this, but it was no longer my business to keep in touch with the politics of the country, and we were soon too hard at work to bother much about the rumours which, in the East, are always so plentiful and may mean so little.

One day towards the end of January, Colonel C., who commanded the French forces and had his headquarters at Jerablus railway station, came down to see me with a very serious face. Trouble had broken out farther north; the garrisons of Urfa and Birijik and of one of the railway stations on the Tell Abyad line had been attacked, and he had news, as yet not fully confirmed, of large numbers of the enemy

advancing on Jerablus itself. He was not strong enough to reinforce or to relieve the outlying posts, not strong enough even to hold the railway station at Jerablus if it were attacked. He proposed to move his forces down into the ruins, and to content himself with holding the ancient walls of Carchemish and the great bridge of the Baghdad railway which lay at their feet. Had I any objection to the move?

It was polite of the Colonel to ask, but, of course, I could not have objected if I had wanted to, and I did not want to, for we were very good friends; but I did not relish the idea of any interruption to the excavations. I pointed out that we as Englishmen had officially nothing to do with what was not a recognised war, but a local disturbance; that we would go on working as long as we could, and clear out if work became impossible. Our sympathies were, as he knew, with the French, and we could be of much more use to them if we could retain the position of being strictly neutral, but we appealed to him to respect the antiquities of the site. Colonel C., who was keenly interested in archæology, of course agreed. It was arranged that a number of trial pits dug by Campbell-Thompson in 1912 should serve as dug-outs for the troops, the Colonel to have a bedroom and staff office in the expedition house, and the other officers to live in tents alongside. The wall mounds of Carchemish were to be wired and emplacements dug in them for the two machine-guns which formed the total of the French artillery, but otherwise there was to be no disturbance in the ruins. And apart from the rooms allotted to the French, the expedition house was to be neutral ground; any natives desiring to see us were to have free access through the French lines; visitors and workmen alike were to leave all firearms with the French outposts, and have them returned on leaving the lines. We all felt that it was a rather Gilbertian position, but probably the best that could be devised in the circumstances.

On the other side of the Euphrates, where the trouble had begun, the nearest tribes were the Kitkan Kurds under Busrawi Agha, and the Barazi, also a Kurdish tribe, the headship of which was divided between two brothers, Mustapha and Bozan ibn Shahin Beg. Between the two tribes there had been a long-standing feud, which I had patched up before the war; during the war it broke out again, and in 1919 we had only with difficulty maintained peace. The sheikhs were old friends of mine, and at the beginning of the previous November I had been at especial pains to urge on them the wisdom of submitting cheerfully to the French occupation. Both parties had agreed to do so, and to Lieutenant B., the French Political Officer, I had

confidently reported that he would find them friends; but I had failed to allow for Busrawi's diplomatic astuteness.

The day after the arrival of the French staff Busrawi had presented himself, and had been lavish—and quite sincere—in his professions of goodwill; his old enemy ibn Shahin's name was mentioned, and Busrawi spoke of him in the warmest terms; he went off leaving an excellent impression. Immediately after his visit the rumour spread that Busrawi, with his usual cunning, had got in first with the French, and had seized the opportunity to poison their minds against the Shahins. Busrawi indignantly denied this, and declared that he had gone out of his way to recommend his old foe. It was true, but it was so improbable that every one was convinced of the contrary, and each denial was taken as a further admission of guilt. The Shahins, feeling that the pitch had been queered, remained at home awaiting events. The sheikh of the Kitkan sent them a message urging them to call at French headquarters, and that, of course, decided them to stop away. Lieutenant B., on Busrawi's second visit, asked him why the Shahins had not called. He replied that he had urged them to do so, and if they did not come, it was presumably for some good reason of their own; beyond that he would not discuss the matter. The French naturally suspected the Shahins of being deliberately hostile; the Shahins felt that it was too late to remove the bad impression, and resented the influence which, as they imagined, the French had allowed Busrawi to acquire over them. By the time I reached Jerablus the Kitkan sheikh, without doing a thing which was not strictly correct, had succeeded in creating a definite breach between the new Government and his old enemy.

When the outbreak occurred, the Barazi tribe were inevitably on the side of the Turks; Busrawi, on the other hand, came in at once to Jerablus and talked the matter over with Colonel C. and myself. He was disarmingly frank. He had, he said, no particular love for the French, and certainly owed them no loyalty; his only motive was to save his own skin and to preserve his tribe. He could quite understand that in the end the French were bound to win, and it was therefore best to be on their side; but in the meantime the Turks were calling on him to rally to the Nationalist cause, his neighbours the Barazi were seeking an occasion against him, and they and the Turks together could crush him in a moment. Were the French prepared to give him efficient support? His eyes twinkled, for, of course, he knew the answer. C. was not less frank. He replied that for the moment he could do nothing; if he could not relieve the threatened railway posts, he certainly

could not send men out into the blue to defend Busrawi's open villages. Busrawi must temporise, pretending to stand in with the Turks, but in reality doing nothing against the French. When the latter were strong enough to take the field, then he could show his true colours, and his loyalty would be properly rewarded. The sheikh went off promising to do his best.

It was, I think, on the last day of January that the Colonel came to me with more serious news, sent in by Busrawi. A large force of Kurds and Arabs, with some Turkish support, was marching against Jerablus, and was already only some thirty miles away. It was a bad look-out for the French, and also for our excavations. I asked him if he were anxious to fight.

"Good heavens, no," he replied. "I was sent here to preserve the peace, and there is nothing I should so like to do, especially as we are not really strong enough to hold this place if seriously attacked."

"Then you would not think it interference on my part if I tried to stop the fighting?"

"I should be delighted, but you couldn't do it."

I told him that there was a chance of my being able to do so. I knew personally most of the leaders on the other side, and had a little influence with them. If he gave permission, I proposed to go out and meet the enemy and talk things over with them.

"But you'll be shot on sight!"

I assured him I should take good care about that, though I could not be sure of succeeding in the mission; Guy, if he could borrow a mount, would go with me, and we looked forward to a very pleasant picnic. Colonel C. laughed, and remarking that, after all, General Gouraud had suggested that I should be consulted on matters of local politics, gave the scheme his official blessing.

Two days later we passed through the French outposts, Guy on the Colonel's horse, a fine Arab grey, and Hamoudi, who was to act as go-between, on a less showy mount, but far outdoing us in the brilliance of his attire. A few miles out we were met by the Kitkan escort for which I had arranged, headed by Busrawi's son, and together we rode on in the direction of Busrawi's house. Our track took us within a mile or two of Arab Punar, a station on the Baghdad line, and as we came along we heard, quite distinctly, the sound of shots away to the north, and once or twice the thud of a rifle-grenade; the station was being attacked.

Suddenly a man galloped up and drew the chief of our escort aside. He listened, shouted an order to the rest, and with the exception of one elderly man they all turned their horses and cantered off in the direction of the firing; the Kitkan were taking part in

the fight, and the chief's son had received the order to join them.

At Busrawi's house there was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement, but nothing was said about the attack; and as in addition to the usual collection of followers there was conspicuously present a fez-wearing Turk named Fuad Beg, an unpleasant creature who, we understood, was a Nationalist envoy sent to spy on Busrawi's movements, no questions could be asked. From the desultory conversation that went on it would have been difficult to guess that anything abnormal was in the air; but the sheikh found occasion to whisper to me that the meeting had been arranged for the morrow.

The next morning a regular cavalcade rode out. Ahead of us went men loaded with the poles and canvas of a small tent of Damascus applique work; behind were others with charcoal and a set of big coffee-pots, trays, and cups and water. It was only when we had ridden a mile that some one discovered that the coffee itself had been forgotten, and a servant was sent back to repair the omission. The tent was set up in the middle of a shallow saucer-like depression, men lit the fire and busied themselves with the initial rites of coffee-making, and we sat down to await events.

After a while the Barazi sheikhs joined us, attended by a following considerably more numerous than Busrawi's; they were friendly but ill at ease, and clearly mistrustful of the Kitkan. I took them aside and upbraided them for the part they were playing, and was pleased to find they were none too happy in it. They did not want to fight, they said, but the French had been hostile to them from the first. They blustered a bit about ties of religion and race (they had Turkish blood in them), and declared that when it came to a choice between the Turks and the French, they must needs throw in their lot with the former; but it was clear that they would welcome any way out of the present difficulty.

Some time later a sentry posted on the crown of the slope gave notice that the Anayzeh were coming. Guy had just got out his small stand camera, when over the top of the ridge, strung out in a long line, spears and rifles brandished in the air, came Hachim's men. Yelling, they charged straight down the hill at us (I could hear Guy, with his head under the black cloth, expressing the pious hope that they would not mistake the camera for a machine-gun!), and only reined in their horses a few yards from where we stood. They were as wild a looking lot as one might hope to see, lean and ragged desert men not likely to be won over by smooth words, men to whom war, as they knew it, was a game and loot the main passion of life. I was glad to

remember that their leader was not of the same kidney.

Hachim ibn Muheid—who, riding behind his Arabs, now dismounted, and after giving me formal greeting received the welcome of the other sheikhs—was, as all sheikhs must be, a diplomat, and he was also shifty and unscrupulous. For years, during the minority of his nephew Midghem, he had been regent of the western Anayzeh, and had little relished handing over the reins of power to the younger man. Now Midghem had proclaimed his allegiance to the French, and rumour naturally had it that he was well paid for so doing. Hachim, furious that no money had come his way, had taken the more popular course of joining the Turks, thereby posing as the true leader of his tribe and standing a good chance of earning Turkish gold where none was forthcoming from the French. I had last seen him, frightened and humiliated, waiting in an anteroom at our Aleppo headquarters an opportunity to apologise for misbehaviour, and that gave me an advantage over him which I could not afford to let slip. At my hint of it the other sheikhs, all lesser men than he, smiled covertly, and something of his arrogance went from him.

On a carpet spread on the ground in front of the tent we sat and drank the bitter coffee of the desert, with only now and then a murmured reiteration of our greetings to break the silence. Fuad Beg faced me in the circle. After a while I pointed at him. "I am here to speak with my friends, with the sheikhs of the tribes," I said, "and this man is neither; let him go." The Turk got up scowling, and the others breathed more freely. Now we could talk.

We started on the main issue of peace and war. At first all were bellicose enough, but gradually their truer sentiments came to the fore. Busrawi was the most violently Nationalist, but that was, of course, a pose not to be taken seriously, and it had the effect of weakening others from sheer love of contradiction. The Shahins did not want the French, but they did want peace. Several minor sheikhs were of the same mind. Hachim said that for himself he did not desire war, but he had brought his tribe up from far away to fight, had promised them the loot of the French garrisons, and could not lead them back empty-handed. This was a clear hint, and I took him aside with Hamoudi to ask his terms, for Hachim was to be bought. Actually he was less exorbitant than I had expected. If the French chose to pay, we could secure at least a temporary peace, a breathing space, for the defection of the Anayzeh would mean that the other tribes would keep quiet; but, of course, I could promise nothing, and when we rejoined the circle on the carpet Hachim had to be more obstinately

resolved than ever on war to the knife.

This brought in my second issue, the excavations. I pointed out that we were neutral, and cared nothing whether Urfa or Birijik were attacked or not, but if there were fighting at Jerablus the dig could not go on, and that did concern us. They replied that they were only attacking the French, and there was no need for us to be involved. This, I retorted, was nonsense, for the French were actually installed in my house, and any one who shot at them would be shooting at us, "And is there any one here who will fire a shot at my house?"

"God forbid!" came the pious chorus.

"Well, then, since you cannot fight the French there without shooting at me, you cannot fight the French."

There was a rather dismayed silence, and then some one made the happy suggestion that I should send the French back to the railway station, where they could be attacked at pleasure while we carried on our work as usual. The sheikhs brightened up.

I turned to Busrawi. "If I were in your house, having *dakhled* to you, flung myself on your mercy, and were threatened by an enemy who would attack you for sheltering me, and he were stronger than you, would you put me out to save yourself?"

The whole shocked circle cried out on the idea.

"And would you ask me to do this shame?"

"God forbid!" once more.

"And, by God, the French stay in my house until they choose to go, and either they have peace or our work must stop. Tell me, oh sheikhs, for whom do you do this thing?"

"For the Turks."

"And for what aim do you work?"

"For the independence of the people!" the agitators' slogan came patly from all.

"And I serve the British Museum, and work for archæology, which is knowledge. Which is greater, the British Museum or the empire of the Turks?"

"W'Allah, the British Museum!" replied the sheikhs, who had probably never heard of it before.

"And which is greater, liberty or knowledge?"

"Knowledge is greater."

"Therefore my work must go on and yours must stop. There shall be no attack on the French at Jerablus, nor within an hour's walk shall any man of you fire a single shot. Ya Fuad Beg! come here and learn the decision of the tribes!" and in front of the furious Turk the sheikhs swore to the terms.

They had been jockeyed into accepting a ruling which was not likely to be popular, so it was well to let them talk the matter over among themselves, and to give Hamoudi a chance to have his say, repeating and embellishing all that I had said,

so I got up and joined the group of Anayzeh behind the tent. They had caught wind of the way things had gone, and bore me no good will for robbing them of excitement and plunder. One great hairy-chested scoundrel thrust his face into mine, asking truculently what business I had out in the desert. He was bluffing me, so I bluffed back, and told him I went where I pleased.

"The desert is ours," he declared, "and if you enter it you find death." I assured him no one had ever hurt me out there, or was likely to.

"If I saw you I should kill you, were it only for the sake of the coat you wear, which is a good coat."

"You wouldn't, because you couldn't."

"I could not?"

"No, never."

"W'Allah w'Allahi, it is in my mind to kill you now!" and he drew out the long curved knife.

As his sheikh's guest I was perfectly safe, so I laughed and pushed the crowd back, retiring a step. "Make way, my brothers, for this man would kill me and needs space for the blow. Mark well, you, where you would strike!"

The fellow looked abashed. "But I cannot kill you *here*."

"Not here nor anywhere, nor at any time, as I told you."

He swore a great oath, and laughed with the rest. "By God, you were right, brother, so give me a cigarette instead!" And we rode back to Jerablus, leaving only one angry man, the Turk, Fuad Beg.

. . . . . .

We awoke next morning to a white world and driving snow, which was to lie deep on the ground for twelve days. The change of weather hit the French hard, for they were short of firewood, and could get none from a hostile country. Cooking was difficult, and fires for warmth were out of the question. The poor Senegalese in the dug-outs suffered terribly, and in the staff office, which served also as mess-room, we could hear the officers stamping up and down and swinging their arms against their sides in the vain effort to keep up their circulation. Meal-time brought the only comfort, and at half-past seven the orderlies trudging across the courtyard with the hot soup were welcomed with cheers of relief.

On the second day Hachim sent me word that the enemy forces, while they would not attack, were to be sent forward to the edge of the forbidden zone so as to bring pressure to bear on the French with a view to the settlement which he had proposed. Colonel C. was ready to agree to the proposal, but the Anayzeh leader demanded cash down, which the Colonel had not got, and swore that his men could not be put off with promises; and since communications with Aleppo were now cut, the negotiations came to nothing. It was after this that Busrawi

dropped in one day with a minor Anayzeh chief, and in strict confidence told me that an attack was planned for that night. I protested violently against this breach of the agreement, but Busrawi merely smiled slyly. It was, he said, not really a breach at all. There were Turkish representatives in the camp who were accusing the sheikhs of being half-hearted, and were reporting adversely on them to headquarters. Besides this, it was hard to keep the tribesmen together when they were suffering so from the cold with nothing to distract their thoughts from the weather, and so, to satisfy them both . . . He whispered to me all the plan, and taking my laughter for approval, stamped off through the snow. "They do always eat at the same hour, do they not?" was his last question, shouted through the dusk.

Guy and I dined at the same time as the French. We were already at table, and had listened smilingly to the joyful voices from the next room which hailed the soup, when there was the crack of a rifle, and a bullet whistled above the roof; then came a scattered volley, followed by the sharper sound of the French outposts returning the fire.

From next door came exclamations, orders, the sound of men donning greatcoats and thrusting their feet into the heavy boots which had been discarded for the day; the attack had begun, and the officers were hurrying out to organise the defence. We, on the other hand, knowing the secret, could go on quietly with our dinner. Already, except for one or two shots let off by nervous sentries, the "attack" had fizzled out. In less than half an hour the French officers, puzzled and angry, had returned, and were flinging down belts and coats preparatory to starting afresh the interrupted meal. Then came a stream of curses; the soup stood cold and uninviting on the table,—the cooks had been called out to strengthen the defence force,—the other dishes had been neglected and spoilt, and, with their parsimonious wood ration, dinner, the one joy of the miserable day, might be salved after a fashion but could not be made good.

On the next night and the next after that the farce was repeated. Nobody was hurt. The enemy, true to their promise, never tried to hurt any one, and never came in sight, so ran no risks themselves. Once it was a slow desultory fire kept up for twenty minutes, once a series of ragged volleys which drew the fire of rifle-grenades from the defenders, but both "attacks" were most carefully timed to ruin the French dinner. On the fourth day Busrawi came in with a letter for the Colonel signed by the leading sheikhs. After due salutations, they expressed their regret that "owing to the cold weather

there would be no battle to-night," and hoped that the officers would enjoy their soup!

Busrawi used to come in pretty often, usually seeing Colonel C. in my room, and sometimes giving him useful information. Once the Colonel, who had conceived a genuine liking for the wily Kurd, remonstrated with him on the risk he ran by these visits. "You say that you come to see the English," he urged; "but every one knows that you see me too, and the Turks cannot fail to look on you as a traitor. I know that you are on our side, but there is no need for you to prove it by coming so often, and I don't want you to get into trouble with them."

"There is no danger," said Busrawi airily; "I tell them I come to spy on you, and I give them news every time when I get back."

"But nothing worth having," replied the Colonel; "I take care of that!"

"What matter? They are fools."

The Colonel returned to the charge. The Turks might be fools, but they could not be otherwise than suspicious of the sheikh's comings and goings, and he really ought to stop them. "Why, even to-day," he added, "you may be running your head into a noose."

Busrawi smiled. "I have never been safer than to-day."

"How so, seeing that they know that you are here?"

"Of course they know that I am here, but they also know that my eldest son is at this moment blowing up the railway bridge over the Sajur!"

It was a hard nasty shock for the Colonel. True, no trains had run for some time past, but the bridge over the Sajur valley was an essential link in his communications with the south, and its destruction seemed to cut him off finally from all hope of speedy relief. His face was very grim as he turned on the Kurd.

"Busrawi," he said, "I told you to pretend friendship with the Turks but to do nothing against us, and now you confess to cutting our lines. Is this your good will towards France?"

"How could I show it better?" retorted the sheikh imperturbably. "The Turks decided to blow up the bridge, and as their loyal subject and the sheikh of my tribe, I claimed that my son should command the raid and himself fire the mine. That makes me safe, and so preserves your friend. Further, my son may be a brave man, but he has small brains, and knows nothing about explosives. Any one of the Turks could have done the destruction better than he, but as my son he will do it himself, and very badly it will be done, so there will be the least possible damage to your bridge. W'Allah!" and he sighed, "it is my fate to be misunderstood!"

As I translated the Colonel began to laugh, and at the end

threw up his hands in surrender. "Il est impayable, ce brave Busrawi!"

A few days later Busrawi was seated on the floor against the wall of our living-room, smoking and drinking coffee, lamenting, partly to me but more for the benefit of the two followers who sat on either side of him (one, I knew, a man in whom he had little trust), the hardships of his lot. He painted a moving picture of himself as a man of peace, a simple-minded man, living at the wrong time, and threatened by perils which he could not understand:—

"Alas for the woful thing,
That a poet true and a friend of man
In sorrowful days of broil and ban
Should ever be born a king!"

I suggested the proverb of the devil and the deep sea, which was new to him, and he seized on it with avidity and enlarged on it, pointing out the moral to his companions. Suddenly I leaned forward—

"And don't you love it all, Busrawi Agha?"

"My God, I do!" his eyes flashed; and then, recollecting himself and covering up his face with his headcloth, "My God, I often wish that I were dead!" And while the two Kurds groaned in sympathy, I caught again the glint of the sheikh's malicious smile.

. . . . . .

At Jerablus we had peace, but not so the other posts. No direct news came through from them, but rumours reached us, and were none too happy. The little garrison at Birijik twenty miles up the river was reduced to sorry straits by hunger, though still holding out gallantly in a group of stone-built houses on the outskirts of the town. Had the Turks possessed artillery the place would have fallen at once, but luckily they had none, and even when they tried to make good the omission they were unsuccessful. An Armenian blacksmith in the town was compelled to manufacture a trench mortar out of wood bound round with iron hoops, and three solid round-shot were cast from scrap-iron; black powder was the charge. An emplacement was dug in the shelter of a ruined house some thirty yards from the French fort, and the Turks essayed to make a breach. Sometimes the gun failed altogether, and the ball trundled harmlessly across the open; sometimes it really did shoot, and a stone in the wall face might be splintered. In either case it was incumbent on the Turks to recover their precious projectile, and the French, unable to silence the gun, took a sporting pleasure in picking off the enemy soldiers who left cover in their attempts to field the ball. The siege had its comic side, but the defenders were almost at their last gasp when a flying column arrived at Jerablus and set out for the relief of Birijik.

As soon as he knew that Birijik was to be relieved,

Busrawi with all the followers he could collect rode off to the town, informed the Turks of the approaching danger, and demanded that he and his tribe should have the honour of bearing the brunt of the enemy's attack. The Turks were delighted to comply, and the Kitkan, leaving their horses in a sheltered spot behind the trenches, which the Turks had dug in anticipation of an attempt to relieve the post, took up their position in the front line, supported by such Turkish regulars as were available, and by a heterogeneous collection of armed townsfolk. The French force advanced from the south-east along the river, their right flank covered by a slender screen of Algerian cavalry, and on coming within range opened fire on the trenches with two light field-guns.

At the first shot the Kitkan scrambled out and, not leaving their rifles, dashed helter-skelter through the supporting lines, spreading dismay and panic; reaching their horses they mounted, and with a remarkable recovery of discipline galloped round the town on the land side, and took up a fresh position behind it on the road leading north-west to Rumkale. Their stampede had broken up the defence, and while the French advanced almost unopposed to the walls of the beleaguered post, there was pouring out from the north gate of the town a stream of fugitives, men and women, wild with terror and laden with such treasure as they could salve at short notice. Busrawi's men, astride the road at a convenient point, held up the stream, and relieved the runaways of their burdens, cursing the cowards who would so betray the cause of liberty. Busrawi subsequently handed over to the Nationalist representatives a decent percentage of his loot, which he described as fines imposed for desertion in the face of the enemy, and his tribe profited to the extent, it was said, of £1500 in cash and jewellery. As there was nobody to contradict his version of the day's happenings, he gained considerable credit with the Turks for courage and loyalty to the cause, while he could claim to have put the French under an obligation by assuring them so easy a victory. He had paid off a number of private scores and pocketed a handsome sum of money. Altogether Busrawi had had a very successful day.

The position of the garrison at Urfa was known to be wellnigh desperate. Hemmed in by the Turks, exposed to artillery fire at point-blank range, themselves short of ammunition and with rations reduced to a starvation minimum, they could not hold out much longer; and unless the whole left bank of the Euphrates was to be given up, something had to be done for their relief. Unfortunately the French Government had responded ill to General Gouraud's demands for rein-

forcements, and the only force available was the small overworked "flying column" commanded by Colonel Normand. It came at last to Jerablus, but though there was gallant talk of saving Urfa few really believed that these tired men, poorly equipped and with little artillery backing, could fight their way through the mountains that lay between Urfa and the river. But however the soldier might appraise the column that came straggling in along the Aintab road, to the unsophisticated native it appeared formidable enough. As soon as Colonel Normand crossed the Euphrates, Busrawi, encouraged by this show of strength, abandoned all disguise, and with his whole tribe joined the French.

The Turks, supported by the Barazi and other tribes, had taken up position in the plain of Seruj. There was a hard-fought battle in which the Kitkan took part, but did not greatly distinguish themselves, and the Turks were defeated; but they were not routed, and merely withdrew to the foothills, where they could fight again with the advantage of terrain on their side. The French, left masters on the field, had suffered fairly heavy loss, and were too weak to venture on a further advance. The stalemate, fatal for the Urfa garrison, was likely to be no less so for the Kitkan sheikh.

Two days after the battle, when it had become known that Normand could not advance and would have eventually to retire, Busrawi announced his intention of going home. The staff remonstrated with him, for his house, though not far away, was too far to have French protection. He would have to cross part of the Shahins' territory, and the Shahins had been further embittered by the fact that, on their march up, the French had burnt their house and village. Busrawi had openly thrown in his lot with the French, and clearly his wisest course was to remain with them until the fortune of war turned. But he was deaf to counsel and went.

A few days later Colonel C. brought us the news that Busrawi had been captured and shot by the Turks. We were all genuinely distressed, I for an old friend, the Colonel and his officers for the genial rogue who had endeared himself to them almost as much by his rogueries as by the fine qualities which he undoubtedly possessed —courage, good comradeship, and humour. The next day rumour had it the sheikh was captured indeed and condemned to death, but not yet dead, and we all smiled, for where Busrawi was concerned, while there was life there was very much hope; given a chance to use his wits, he might well escape, even from such a fix as this. Two days later we heard that he was back in the French camp by Seruj.

He had ridden up to Colonel Normand's headquarters solitary and morose, his headcloth wrapped about his face and his

shoulders bowed. Greeted joyfully as one come back from the dead, he had shrunk as from a blow. "Dead I am," he muttered. "Would that I had indeed died before this, would to God that I had died!" They took him into the tent and asked his news. It was a sorry story.

He had reached home without ill chance, but that same night the Turks surrounded the village and captured him and all his family, including his younger son, a clever lad who was the apple of his father's eye. He had been court-martialled and condemned to death. Just before he was to be led out and shot the Turks offered him an alternative—namely, that within the space of four days he should find for them the sum of three thousand pounds in gold. His family were kept as hostages, and would be shot if he failed to return; did he come back without the money and surrender himself, his life should stand for theirs. "I ought to have refused," he groaned, "but a man's life is dear to him, and I had no time to think, and so I came away. But for what? They have plundered and burnt my village, and my followers are scattered; they have dug up the floor of my house and found and carried off such money as I had, and they have driven away my flocks and herds. I am a beggar, and how can I find three thousand pounds who have not three pence? I have no friends, for all the tribes are against me, saying that I have joined myself with the enemies of the faith. I must go back and die a dog's death at the hands of the Osmanli, and what gain are these days of grace to me? They have made me a mockery and a laughing-stock, and men of my own tribe will spit at the name of Busrawi, who left his children and his womenfolk in the hands of his enemies in order that for four days more he might draw the breath of a coward. I should have died then; and now, why am I here? Before God, I have not come to you as my friends, but because the world is shut against me, and there is no place of my own where I can go. Would to God I had died!"

The officers had liked Busrawi, and were moved by the man's utter misery, but this was not merely a question of sentiment. The sheikh had always been on their side, and at the last had joined them openly, and his was the only tribe on that side of the river—indeed, in all the country north of Aleppo—which had espoused the French cause, so that for the sake of prestige alone it was impossible to let him down. It was not an easy thing to raise three thousand pounds in cash, but to do so was cheaper than to incur the odium of letting their ally go back to his death, and Busrawi was told that the French were ready to pay his ransom. For once the Kurd seemed taken aback, the unexpected generosity of the gift struck him speechless, and only when he

was about to ride away with the gold hidden in the folds of his belt was he able to give thanks with anything of his usual aplomb.

This was the story as we heard it at the time from the French. Another version, pieced together from the sheikh's half-willing admissions and from the reports of tribesmen, shows him in another light and bears the stamp of truth to those who know him.

When Busrawi rode home from the battlefield of Seruj, it was a night of very black despair that covered him. The French had shot their bolt and failed, and could no longer help him; to the Turks he now stood confessed an enemy and a traitor, and his territory was in their hands. He must have turned over in that tortuous mind of his many a shift of cunning before there came to him the idea of that masterstroke which was to save him, an idea which perhaps appealed to him less for the real hope it held out—indeed, the hope was slight at best—than for the humour it contained, for its effrontery.

At dawn of the next day Busrawi rode into the Turkish camp. The Turks were astounded at the apparition, but soon recovered sufficiently to arrest the traitor, and buffeted and insulted on every hand he was dragged before a council of the chiefs. One after another bore witness, the Shahins most vehemently of all, and their witness was conclusive. Many old offences were raked up against him, but such were felt to be beside the point. They were smarting from their defeat of two days before, and everybody knew that the Kitkan tribe had fought on the side of the French, that Busrawi himself had been with the enemy. In the face of this, trial could be no more than a form, and its result was a foregone conclusion. But Busrawi demanded a hearing. He denied indignantly that he was a traitor to the Osmanli cause, to which, he averred, he had in the past rendered signal service. He had always been a subject of the Turks, and hoped always to be such, nor had he for one moment dreamed of fighting against them.

Bozan ibn Shahin Beg interrupted him with a not unnatural impatience. Busrawi had marched out with the French, and if he had not meant to fight the Turks what had he proposed to do?

This was just the opening that the sheikh wanted. He pointed an accusing finger at Bozan.

"There is my enemy, as all the world knows," he retorted. "The French told me that they would attack the Barazi, and I went with them. Has there not been a feud of blood between us these many years, and which of all you would refuse help against an enemy too strong for you? I went out with the French, but it was not against the Turks, my masters; it was against those men who have fought me in the past and are my accusers to-day. The grudge that they

have against me now is the answer to their charge, for I have laid waste their villages and burnt their houses. This is the warfare of the tribes!"

Busrawi had scored heavily, for few if any of the sheikhs present cared greatly for the Turks, and none of them would have set the Turkish cause before a blood feud, of all motives the strongest to a tribesman. But if he had won in a measure the sympathy of the Kurds and Arabs, he could not expect so easily to impose on the more sophisticated Turks, and these turned on him at once with the obvious objection that, even if his first move had indeed been against his private enemy, that was no defence, for he had fought on the French side when the Turks were against them in the field, and there could be no pretence of tribal war. As a subject of the Osmanli he ought to have been with them, and the actual battle had found him and his tribe with the enemy. Could he deny that?

"I take refuge with God!" replied Busrawi. "I am a simple man, and it may be that I have done mistakenly, but in all things my heart has been loyal to the Turks."

They cursed him for a man without shame, but he demanded to be heard.

"You call me a friend of the French," said he, "but you bade me pretend to be such, and from that you have won no small profit in the past, seeing that I went freely into their lines and brought you back news of their doings. This time I was with them when they planned to march out from Jerablus, but they spoke only of attacking Shahin Beg, and as that was my own affair, I said nothing, but marched with them against the enemy of my tribe. But after Arslan Tash was burnt, I learned that they would advance farther, and I knew that the next fighting would be with the Osmanli. Now I could have left the French then as easily as I have left them now in the hour of their victory, and all men would have praised me; and I was minded to do so, but I bethought me of another plan. Had I come away, my veil of friendship would have been torn from my face, and I could never hereafter have served you by their means as I have done in the past; and yet that was but a small thing, seeing that my heart was wholly with you in the battle. But in the battle, thought I, what could I do? The power of the Osmanli is as the power of God, and what am I, and what are the men of my tribe, that the Osmanli should have need of us in war? Every man who has known their rule is loyal to them, and will rise in arms at their bidding; they have no lack of men to aid them against their enemies, and of what avail are the few tribesmen who follow such an one as me? No, what the government of the Turks lacks to-day is not men but money, and I resolved

to give them gold. I am a poor man, but in friendship there is a great treasure, and I saw that if the French were but sure of my friendship I could get from them the gold that the Turks most need. Therefore I stayed with them for the battle, but all you will bear me witness that I and my tribe were of no account therein. We were in the rear, and no man here can say that one of his tribe was slain by the Kitkan, yet were the French persuaded that Busrawi was their man heart and soul, and I came away from their camp a proved friend. And now I am here to do my duty to the Osmanli. Go you to my village—no man will resist you,—my wives and my children are there, take them prisoner, and bring them to the camp. This for the sake of the game that I would play with the French, and also should any here doubt me they will be my sureties. To-morrow I will go to the French as one whose friendship for them has brought him to ruin; I will tell them that I was captured with all my house, was judged and condemned to death for their sake, and am held to ransom for a thousand pounds. For very shame they will pay, and I will bring the money here as my offering to the cause of liberty and the Osmanli nation; and is there any now present who has given to that cause a thousand golden pounds? And if I fail, or if any think that I would go back to the French and not return —well, have I not put my household into your hands, and they are hostages for my honour? Such is the plan that I have devised to help the Turks, and will any man after this call me traitor? If indeed they do, then let me die, for death is better than an ill name with one's friends."

Only half convinced, but eager for the gold, the Turks laid hands on the sheikh's family and let him go, and he proved as good as his word. It was characteristic of Busrawi that when all seemed lost he should so have played his game that the one desperate throw which could save his life would also, if it succeeded, enable him to pocket two thousand pounds.

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In the summer of 1920 the French withdrew from Jerablus, and Busrawi, always suspect and now useless, was seized by the Turks and exiled. From some motive of policy they refrained from killing him, but he was subjected to every form of hardship and insult. When France and Turkey came to an agreement, one of its terms was Busrawi's release. He was compensated for his losses, and decorated by the French, and as his territory fell on the Syrian side of the new frontier he could return home in peace. He still lives. I have not seen him now these seven years, but from time to time I have news of him, and only a week ago there came to me an elaborate message of greetings from this master of many wiles.

MY MERRIEST CHRISTMAS.

BY JOHN DILL ROSS.

SOME years ago I was the Senior Shipping Clerk of the Golconda Company, Limited, Singapore, a very responsible and highly paid post.

Of all the steamship lines with which I was connected I was most interested in the vessels of the Russian Volunteer Fleet. They were magnificent ships, amongst the finest and fastest afloat at that period. Then the captains and officers were such nice pleasant persons, simply overflowing with hospitality of the most luxurious order.

I worked very hard in a very hot climate, but I enjoyed everything connected with my billet. The Christmas holidays were coming on, and, feeling fagged and played out after a busy spell, I voted myself a much-needed holiday of three or four days. I found that Christmas week was unusually clear of any important business.

I owned a plantation about twelve miles out of Singapore town. It was beautifully situated on the seashore, and my bungalow, if unpretentious, was roomy and comfortable. I had no difficulty in making up a house party of some of the nicest people east of Suez, while a charming woman consented to act as the hostess of my bachelor establishment. I had disclosed my plans to my chief assistant, Mr Peter Blackett, promising him the New Year holidays if I took Christmas. He was a nice lad, and readily agreed to replace me during my absence. We had barely settled these details when a cablegram was handed in advising the arrival of the *Kostroma* on Christmas Day *en route* for Vladivostok with 1800 troops on board. I had always managed the Russian steamers myself, but Peter represented that it was merely a question of coaling and provisioning the big transport, and that he was quite equal to the occasion. I thought so too, and decided to carry out my original programme.

I always rode on horseback to my plantation. On the 23rd December I visited my stables, to find that my roadster Chang, a magnificent waler standing 17 hands high, was dead lame. I had a couple of useful trappers available, but it seemed tame to drive a horse in a buggy, so in an evil moment I sent a chit to Abrams' yard ordering a suitable mount for my ride, the horse to be sent to my office at 4 P.M. on Christmas Eve. I spent the 24th with Blackett and the rest of my staff arranging how business was to be done during my absence. Punctually at 4 P.M. I was told that my mount was ready for me. Dressed in my riding kit, I ran downstairs to see what manner of

charger Abrams' stables had sent. I beheld a great, big, lathy, razor-backed, double-jointed, double-ended beast, which lashed out at me directly I got near it. I spotted the brute at once. It was Lorna Doone, an Australian mare which had run in three or four races at the last meeting, and had let down her backers, if she ever had any. She was said to have savaged several syces, and to have lost the only race in which she was leading because she stopped to eat her jockey after she had thrown him. I observed that the genius who sent me this mount had carefully provided a racing-saddle and bridle. I also noted that the girths wanted tightening, and the stirrup-leathers to be let down to the last hole. I was not going to be frightened by any moke from Abrams' yard, so I got to work. Lorna Doone and I started on a kind of waltz, and then a sort of polka. We ended by inventing the fox-trot. A pair of formidable jaws clashed within an inch of one ear, while a flying hoof just missed the other. I never knew such a versatile performer. I adjusted matters, and swung myself into a little bit of a saddle never intended for a six-footer riding about 12 stone.

My staff looked on with interest as their chief was being tossed like a pancake. Lorna Doone was doing a bit of buck-jumping, with her nose well between her knees and a back like a railway arch. I sat out that little lot all right, and, to the admiration of all beholders, Lorna Doone slid away from my office doors stern foremost; then she progressed sideways, and performed some exciting movements in circles. It was a circus without the sawdust. Still by deftly handling my reins I kept the mare drifting in the right direction through Raffles Square, until I reached the Esplanade, when she settled down to a rattling gallop which I did not even attempt to check. We had several narrow escapes, as had a variety of citizens, white and coloured. I thrust my feet well into my stirrups, and, sitting back, began to enjoy myself. We thundered over Rochore Bridge, and got out into the open country. It was grand to feel the wind whistling in my ears as Lorna Doone, with a long tireless stride, flung the miles behind her. My word! How that mare had been misjudged. She had a wonderful turn for speed, and her staying powers were immense. I decided that what she wanted was weight to steady her, and a rider who knew how to handle her. Had I not bought Chang very cheap because nobody could do anything with him? And now the great horse fed out of my hand, and followed me like a dog. I would buy Lorna Doone, and ride her myself at the next races. I could get her for next door to nothing; and what a book I could make! I knew that, although I rode straight to hounds, I was con-

sidered a "mug" at racing, and so I am. A man may be very fond of horses, and yet be a perfect fool at backing them. I always lost at the races. What with Lorna Doone's rotten reputation, my heavy weight, and established character at the game, I should get tremendous odds. Golden dreams floated before my eyes. It was not so much that I cared about the money, though I should not be sorry to get a bit of my own back again, but I saw myself up for the Gentlemen Riders, and winning the race from the favourite in the commonest of canters. What a triumph for the "mug" and the "duffer" who could never spot a winner.

Lorna Doone kept up her never-tiring gallop until we reached the long sloping hill leading up to Buddoh, and then she slackened down into an uncomfortable sort of canter. Some idiots can never leave well alone, and I was one of them that afternoon. The mare was not in the least bit distressed, and had hardly turned a hair. I thought I would try her out a bit more. She had galloped for her own pleasure, she might gallop for mine. So I tried to shake her up into a gallop, but she refused to respond. I gave her the spur. That settled matters. I ought to have known that Lorna Doone would never stand a touch of the rowels on such short acquaintance. The mare simply went mad. However, I had warmed to my work, and sat it out really well until an ominous clink of metal striking the ground warned me that my near stirrup had gone. It being quite impossible to stick to my tiny saddle with nothing to balance myself with, I went overboard at the next mighty heave of Lorna Doone's arched back. Now I had been taught to hang on to my bridle when thrown, and this is quite a sound axiom with a reasonable horse, but not with a fiend like Lorna Doone. She dragged me hither and thither, and, finding that she could not get rid of me any other way, made one of her cat-like movements, and launched a kick with her near hoof which caught me on the head. I let go, and Lorna Doone galloped off in the direction of Singapore town with one stirrup waving triumphantly in the air. Luckily I was wearing a stout buckskin helmet of the regulation pattern at the time, or I should not be writing this story; the front of the said helmet was completely crushed in. As I rose painfully to my feet, I felt acute twinges in my left ankle and wrist. I hobbled to the bank at the side of the road and sat down, conscious of a burning pain in the region of my cheek-bone. I found it was dreadfully swollen, and that my left eye would shortly be closed for repairs. This seemed to be the extent of the damage as far as could be ascertained.

I was still three miles from my destination, Lorna Doone having carried me nine miles

in record time. I remembered that one of my servants was on the way in a gharry loaded with ice, fruit, and other perishable foods, which had to be sent out at the last moment. Presently the gharry hove in sight. I signalled it and got on board.

When we got to my bungalow I heard many voices and sounds of laughter as of people enjoying life. I tumbled out of the gharry, and there was a regular halleluiah chorus at my appearance. I hastily explained that I had had a fall, which really did not matter. I noticed that some of the ladies indulged in little smiles, while the men grinned broadly or laughed heartily at my get-up. My acting hostess, Mrs Flora Dashwood, was much concerned, and insisted on my getting into a long chair. Then that delightful girl, Ethel O'Brien, knew something about first aid. Finding that I had no medicine-chest in the bungalow, she insisted that wet compresses would relieve my hurts. Mr William Barlow came along with the great idea that a good stiff "peg" might be useful. I agreed. It was a long strong drink beautifully iced, and soaked into my shattered system like dew upon the desert sands or something of that kind. I really felt grateful that Lorna Doone had left my mouth alone. What did it matter if one eye was closed when I could see out of the other, whereas like any other man I had only one mouth, which happened to be particularly useful just then. Flora and Ethel came with a pile of bandages soaking in cold water. My head and wrist were attended to first; then my riding-boot was deftly slit to permit of my swollen ankle being treated. I discovered that wet compresses are really very soothing, especially when they are put on by pretty women. The men began to think that their host was a bit of a bore, until the other ladies manifested a certain interest in male creatures who could move about, and looked out of two eyes instead of one.

At half-past eight dinner was announced. Feeling vastly improved, I insisted on sitting up to have my share of it. We had a mulligatawny soup fit to wake the dead, some capital fish, a splendid turkey, and a plum pudding sent by Fortnum and Mason. The wines included a very excellent champagne, and by the time we got to the coffee, liqueurs and cigarettes, I was as jolly as a sand-boy. I chatted, laughed, and drank with my guests as if nothing had happened. Mr William Barlow was moved to say that I was "as game as a pebble." Mr C. J. Davy concurred, with a corollary to the effect that I was the sort of lad who would die with his boots on—probably at no distant date.

At half-past ten Flora and Ethel insisted upon my going to bed, as too much excitement might set up feverish symptoms. I went to bed to stretch myself between cool sheets with

a certain sense of pleasure, although I discovered a variety of lumps and bumps about me hitherto overlooked. Lorna Doone had dragged me about over rough and stony places before delivering the final kick which knocked me out.

I thought about Flora, a dear and pretty woman. I regretted that her husband, George Dashwood, was a brute, who openly neglected his very charming wife. However, that was no business of mine. Then Ethel was the next of the fair sex about whom I meditated —a delightful girl in every sense of the word, and as good as she was delightful. A real pearl of a girl! I knew that she was a penniless orphan dependent on the charity of a hard-bitten old aunt, who led her the life of a white coolie. I could not help thinking what a magnificent wife she would make to a man who could appreciate her at her real value. "What price me?" I ruminated in the vulgar lingo of the day.

Presently I heard sounds as of revelry by midnight, peals and shrills of laughter mingled with the occasional clink of glasses. Evidently my guests were enjoying themselves, which was exactly what I wanted. After this I was visited by a great exposition of sleep, and fell into one of those sweet dreamless slumbers which are the prerogative of the just and of men of outstanding virtue who have been knocked about a bit.

I woke at daybreak next morning stiff and sore from head to foot, but I found that certain swellings had gone down considerably. Altogether I was as bright as ninepence. Dressed in spotless white, I went out on the broad verandah to find the men of my party overhauling their guns and cartridges: the people on my plantation had reported snipe in a swamp about three miles off, and plenty of green pigeon and quail nearer at hand. I am a keen shot myself, but, of course, was out of it. After chota hazri the men tramped off with their guns, and the ladies strolled about the cliff with the exception of Flora and Ethel, who got me into a long chair, and set to work renewing my bandages. It felt so nice that the bright idea flashed upon me that a few days of this treatment would do me a lot of good. I urged the great thought on Flora and Ethel, who consented to stay with me if some of the other guests would remain. The sportsmen returned with a big bag, which ensured an abundance of game for our table. They all clamoured for cocktails. At a propitious moment I launched my invitation for a longer visit. None of the ladies could accept it, and the men, with two exceptions, had engagements which could not be postponed. William Barlow and C. J. Davy were both willing to stay as long as I wished. Somewhat bluntly they gave me to understand that they knew what

was what, and when a decent lad kept a good cellar. This suited beautifully. Flora whispered that a snug little party of five would be splendid. Then everyone trooped down to the sands to have a sea bath at high tide. Ethel being left as nurse in charge of the invalid, I was more than pleased. Ethel and I were at last alone. But I was not going to rush my fences. I wanted to find out what Ethel thought about me before saying anything definite. I put one or two questions, to which I asked a reply. The dear girl simply slipped her little hand into mine and gave it a gentle pressure. I thought it a most delightful answer. It would have been all settled in another five minutes when the unexpected happened. "How oft the schemes of men and mice go phut!" as Burns or Byron or one of those poet fellows is said to have said. At this elysian moment a wretched creaking gharry drove up, out of which scrambled one of my office messengers with a big envelope in his hand, which he delivered to me quite heedless of Ethel. He jabbered that I was urgently wanted on the Russian steamer.

The letter was from Peter Blackett advising me that the *Kostroma* had been berthed at Tanjong Pagar wharves shortly after daylight on that merry Christmas morn. An inspection of her papers showed that besides carrying 1830 troops and a crew of 230 men, her lower holds were filled with explosives and ammunition for the fortresses and army in Siberia. It being against all rules and regulations to berth a ship with such a dangerous cargo alongside wharves crowded with shipping, the *Kostroma* had been ordered to anchor in the roads, where she was now lying. Peter added that he had been advised the only possible course was to order the *Kostroma* to the powder magazine, and after discharging her cargo to return to the wharves to take in her coals and stores. Captain Ivanovsky refused to do anything until I came in person to take charge of such operations as might be necessary.

Peter urged me to lose no time, and added that a steam launch was waiting for me at Johnston's Pier. I saw at once that his scheme was all nonsense. Not a package of that touch-and-go cargo should be handled in Singapore. Much safer and quicker to leave the *Kostroma* at her anchorage in Singapore harbour and send off her coals and supplies in lighters. I realised that unless I got to the scene of action something serious might happen. My first step was to order the gharry pony to be groomed and fed. My guests returned from the sands draped in all sorts of bathing-gowns and towels. My brief announcement that I was off to town at once and must leave my guests to amuse themselves was received with dismay. A male chorus immediately said or sung things about cocktails, which were ordered forthwith. Flora

insisted that I should stop for tiffin, but I was adamant. Not a minute to be lost. Ethel looked singularly pensive, but did not say a word. I promised to return that evening or next morning if possible.

I swarmed into the gharry with my black messenger, for whom I felt an unreasonable hatred. It was a wearisome journey, but finally we got to Johnston's Pier. I saw the *Kostroma* riding to her anchors, but no steam launch. The policeman on duty said that the serang had got tired of waiting, and had steamed off just a few minutes ago. I got into a Chinese sampan and got paddled off to the *Kostroma*, another tiresome experience.

I got on board all right. I had to tell my story to my Russian officers, who were deeply concerned. Mr Peter Blackett was moved to uncontrollable laughter at the predicament of his chief. I was hurried to the ship's hospital, stripped, painted with iodine and other things in sundry places, and bandaged *secundum artem* by a couple of skilful surgeons. I felt much better. On regaining the quarter-deck, I was told that lunch had been delayed for my benefit, and was now ready. It was a gorgeous affair. The *Kostroma* had brought in her cold storage such long-forgotten delicacies as trout, salmon, partridges, and pheasants. My varied emotions had given me a tremendous appetite, and I was able to do justice to a noble repast.

We held a council in the captain's cabin. I tabled my plan of action, which was unanimously approved. I left Peter on board to superintend things afloat, while I went on shore to set everything in motion.

During my stay on board the wind had risen, and there was a jobble of a sea running. When I got into the sampan my Chinaman hoisted a rag of a sail, and we went flying before the breeze. Getting alongside the steps at Johnston's Pier, he suddenly backed his paddles as I was getting out of the boat. My injured ankle refused duty, and I went overboard. Some natives rescued me, and dragged me to the steps. My hat and stick were well afloat on their way to Penang. My bandages were soaked and hanging in loops. I cast them off. A police sergeant lent me his Malacca cane, and with this assistance I wended my way to my office.

I got as far as Raffles Square when I met two leading lights of our shipping fraternity, kept like myself by the never-ceasing emergencies to our never-ending labour, which ceased not even on Christmas Day. They had some difficulty in recognising in the bruised, battered, hatless, soaking wretch before them one of the magnates of our shipping world. Once they spotted me, however, they gave way to the most uncontrolled and unseemly mirth. Mr Woolley of the P. & O. shrieked that I was wearing the finest black eye he had ever seen. Had I been hit with a sledge hammer? (Much laughter.) Mr Jock

Anderson of the great Blue Funnel Line suggested that if I was the winner of the fight, the other man must be in a devil of a mess. Who and where was he? (Loud cheers.) Mr Woolley, who was absolutely gasping, declared that I had been Christmassing like a real thick 'un. (Great applause.)

These friendly ruffians dragged me into the Bodega to stand me a bottle of champagne I did not want. I had to repeat a story of which I was getting very tired, but in which they were much interested. When they started patting me affectionately in some very sore places, I got austere. I told them that if they had no work to do, I had. I hobbled off with my Malacca cane, and left them making ribald remarks.

I got to my office to find quite a number of subordinates and messengers at my disposal. Seated at my accustomed desk I set things going. Orders flew thick and fast by telephone and messenger, and by sundown I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had saved the situation handsomely. Still there was much to be done next day, which I could trust to no one but myself. No chance of going back to my friends at the sunny seashore.

Getting into a specially ordered gharry, I drove to my town house, where I found my Indian butler, Joseph, arrayed in one of my best suits of white, and resplendent in a turban of red-and-gold. He was evidently off to see his best girl. My unlooked-for arrival upset him badly. I curtly told him that I wanted dinner, and that he would have to remain on duty. He said very sulkily that the cooks and other servants were away. I ordered him to get what he could. I changed into dry clothes, after which I sat down to a cheerless and unsatisfactory meal extracted from tins. I handed Joseph the key of the cellar, with instructions to get me a bottle of the best. It was a very fine wine, but it tasted like nothing to me. I got bored to extinction sitting alone in my great empty house, so I decided to drive to the Hotel d'Europe and finish the evening in some sort of society. Joseph ran with alacrity to the stables to order my phaeton, and I sat comfortably enough in the cosy carriage until I reached my destination.

The usually crowded bar was deserted save by three men, in one of whom I recognised Mr Percy Sharpe of the Sharpe Trading Company and two rough-looking strangers. I always avoided Mr Sharpe, who was said to make a good deal of money in the Australian trade by questionable methods; he had also an unenviable reputation for his gambling and drinking habits. It was almost impossible to dodge him on this special occasion, however. Mr Sharpe was delighted to introduce me to Mr Harry Higgins and Mr Jack Jones of Freemantle, Australia. They

were all very anxious to have details of the "mill," in which I was supposed to have taken a leading part. But as they were racing men and in the trade, a battle with a horse was just as good to them as a fight with another man. Besides, they knew all about Lorna Doone, shipped to Singapore by Mr Harry Higgins himself. So I had to tell that little story once more. Sharpe insisted on our going upstairs to the front verandah for a poker game and supper. He had provided a jolly cold turkey and lots of other jolly things, including some jolly bottles which had to be emptied. A couple of whiskies and sodas had to be taken just by way of starting the evening.

I am not a very great hand at poker, although I can hold my own as a rule with ordinary players. To-night I was playing with experts for unusually high stakes. I lost every trick. I could not help suspecting that my opponents were not playing a straight game. When the clock struck twelve, I suggested that we should settle our accounts and have supper, since to supper I was invited. I was no less than $250 down, a bit more than I cared to lose. I handed my "chit" to Mr Sharpe for this amount, and we sat down to supper. The persons from Freemantle soon denounced champagne as "eyewash," and together with Mr Sharpe settled down to whisky, of which they drank too much.

Supper being ended I rose to say good-night, and thanked the lot of them for their hospitality. To my surprise Mr Sharpe took up a bullying tone. I had eaten their supper, and now I was leaving them in the soup! They were going to play poker till daylight, and I was bound to see the game out. This was too much for a sorely tried man. I told Mr Sharpe that he could cash my "chit" for $250 at the bar whenever he liked, and surely that would pay for half a dozen suppers or more. One thing was flat: I had lost quite enough, and would not risk another dollar. I was going home at once.

Mr Higgins wanted to know if I accused them of cheating at cards. I was quite unprepared for this direct attack. I hesitated, as I said that I did not wish to mention anything about cheating. I must go home. That was enough! Mr Higgins roared that I *did* accuse them of cheating. He had shot a man for less. I must put up my dukes and fight him. Even Mr Sharpe saw that this was going too far. Nobody could fight a man in my condition, and if I was assaulted there might be trouble. Mr Jack Jones urged that something had to be done to a condemned scoundrel who accused gentlemen from Freemantle of cheating. He suggested that a toss over the verandah would do me no harm, and might teach me better manners. To this Mr Sharpe agreed. If I broke my neck, they could all swear

that I was drunk and fell over before I could be stopped. The next minute Mr Higgins and Mr Jones, after giving my helpless body two or three preliminary swings, launched it over the balustrade of the verandah. So I was overboard for the third time in the course of a few brief hours. Also I was minus yet another hat and stick. I careered through space, and landed in a bed of thick flowering shrubs, which broke my fall nicely. My syce having seen his master take a short-cut from the hotel verandah to *terra firma*, ran to the bar for assistance. I was dragged out of some rather squashed foliage and put into my phaeton. I was badly shaken up, but apparently that was all of which I had to complain for the moment.

I got home to find all the doors and windows of my house wide open. Not a servant to be seen. A light burning in my bedroom was the only sign of life about the place. I stumbled upstairs to find myself confronted with a nasty smell and a horrid sound of snoring from my bed, in which I found my butler dead drunk —so drunk that he had got in wrong end first. He lay with his head at the foot of the bed, while his naked and dirty feet reposed on my pillows. A bottle of my finest old cognac drained itself over the sheets. My foot knocked up against an empty champagne bottle. Master Joseph had evidently been enjoying himself. I had left the key of the cellar with him for the first time. Hooking back my mosquito curtains, I had a good look at the recumbent Joseph. I remembered that my right arm and right foot were still intact. I went across to a certain rack which hung on the wall of my room, from which I took down a good stiff riding-whip, with which I laid it in on Master Joseph's skin hot and heavy. My right arm was certainly in going order. Joseph howled like a steam siren. He made a most ungodly noise. A particularly fetching cut prompted him to wriggle out of the bed and make a dash for the door. I flung the empty champagne bottle at him just in time. It caught him somewhere about the base of his spine, and I heard his yells as he crashed headlong down the staircase just outside my door. I didn't care whether I had killed the creature or not. A case of manslaughter at the worst. But at last I had got level with somebody.

I rearranged my bed as best I could, and crawled into it accompanied by a myriad of mosquitoes, which bit me on all my tender spots.

At last I felt myself drowsing in spite of my winged tormentors. It was the sleep of pain and exhaustion.

Just as I was going off into a troubled slumber, I heard myself murmuring, "If this isn't my Merriest Christmas, I'll be d——d!"

GENERAL DYER: SOME RECOLLECTIONS.

My first impression of General Dyer was of a sturdily built man, with a soft voice and kindly blue eyes. It was early in 1916 that I met him. He had just come out from India to take command of the cordon of troops which was placed along the Perso-Afghan frontier, to prevent small bodies of Germans from breaking into Afghanistan and stirring up trouble against India. I was in charge of one of the small posts that were dotted along the line (we had about half a brigade to guard 500 miles of frontier), and I awaited his visit of inspection with the feelings which usually animate a junior subaltern on such occasions. He proved, however, to be helpful and sympathetic; his simpleness and friendliness made one feel that one could unfold all one's difficulties to him and be sure of receiving wise advice. At the same time one felt that there was great forcefulness latent in him, and that he was a man not to be wantonly provoked. During his stay, the General with his staff officer and his motor-driver messed with me; in spite of our differences in rank, varying from Private to Brigadier-General, he had the knack of making us all feel at ease together. It struck me even then, before he had undergone any of the hardships of the coming campaign, that his health was already somewhat shaken.

During the following eight months I accompanied him on many of the expeditions which he undertook to subdue the neighbouring tribes, who, encouraged by German agents, had seized the opportunity to raid our convoys. Troops were few and scattered, and British officers painfully short; on one occasion the only British officers we were able to muster for the column he took out were the General and his Brigade Major, with myself as the sole regimental officer. This surely is the only case in the history of the British Army of a force in which the Staff have outnumbered the regimental officers by two to one! However, Dyer revelled in unusual situations, and was always ready to step in himself and fill the breach when hands were short.

One of his most remarkable gifts was his power of gaining the confidence of the local tribesmen. He listened to them with unwearying patience, piecing together the invaluable information that they could supply, and impressing them deeply by his inimitable combination of bonhomie, domination, and bluff. One seldom passed his tent in the evening without seeing some wild, long-ringletted Baluchi tribesman squatting in the doorway, unfolding to the General the

schemes of the hostile chieftains, or the latest reports of the movements of the German parties. Indeed, it was noticeable that they brought their information much more readily to the General than to the Political Agent or to the Staff officers, with whom in the ordinary course of events they should have dealt.

After he had subdued the recalcitrant tribes his health gave way, and he was invalided back to India. I also fell ill, and was ordered back about the same time, so the General very kindly offered to take me with him in his car. This meant accomplishing the journey of some 400 miles across the desert in four or five days, instead of taking nearly a month on camels, so I gladly accepted. There was no road whatsoever, beyond the tracks worn by camels, but it was possible to travel by car as long as one could avoid sand-drifts. We accordingly loaded our kit into the car, and started early one morning. Our first day's trip involved crossing a waterless stretch of forty miles between two wells. All went well until we had got about half-way, and were twenty miles from the nearest water. Here we ran into a series of heavy sand-drifts which had recently been blown up from nowhere, as is their mysterious way.

We were soon ploughing through the sand up to the axle. The General and I had to get out and put our shoulders to the back of the car, and, weak as we were, heave like coolies, while Allen, the chauffeur, sat cool and comfortable at the wheel. We progressed in this manner about fifty yards per hour, the blazing sun beating down on us all the while and the engine boiling away merrily, lapping up our precious reserve of drinking water. After an hour or two of this heaving and pushing I felt nearly at the end of my tether, and the General did not look to be in much better way. The sand-drifts apparently continued without end in front of us, so I suggested that it would be wiser to turn and go back to the last well before all our water had boiled away in the radiator. Dyer, however, was not a man to be stopped easily, and gave my suggestion scant consideration. We accordingly continued our exertions for what seemed an eternity, but I suppose was not really more than another hour, when the car settled the matter by breaking its axle-shaft.

We were now in a pretty plight; our water was almost finished; the car was broken down, and we were both utterly exhausted, and quite incapable of doing a twenty-mile march to the nearest water. However, Allen, with most commendable forethought, had brought a spare shaft with him, so he started immediately to take the axle down and replace the broken shaft. We were now able to sit quietly and watch Allen sweating at his task—a welcome turn of the tables!

Towards late afternoon he successfully completed the job; it was now quite obvious that it would be madness to try to go on. The only thing to do was to unload the car and carry the kit to the place where we had first struck the sand, only a couple of hundred yards off. We could then turn the car and endeavour to get it back to the firm desert. The General and I accordingly resumed our rôle of coolies, and staggered through the sand with bundles of bedding, provisions, and spare parts. When we had completed this, we once more put our shoulders to the car, and started to work it back over the ground that we had so laboriously gained. Fortunately, the slope of the ground was now with us, and we made considerably better progress with the lightened car, reaching terra firma about sunset. Once there we loaded up quickly, and a few hours' drive through the darkness brought us back to our starting-point without further adventure, beyond Allen's tendency to go to sleep at the wheel, which had to be carefully watched! On our next attempt we got through successfully by another route, but I had had an unforgettable demonstration of Dyer's bulldog tenacity once he had undertaken a course of action.

One last picture of Dyer, which I always like to recall when I hear hard things said about him. We had marched all night and far into the scorching morning; at last the column halted, and we sat down to await the arrival of the baggage. The General, by this time worn and ill, and on the point of being placed on the sick list, had thrown himself down in the scanty shade of a stunted bush. After a time, desiring a drink of water, he called out to his Indian bearer to bring his water-bottle. No reply came, however, so he looked round and saw that his bearer had gone off to sleep, with the usual facility of the Indian for taking a nap at any odd moment. The bearer was young and strong, and I quite expected that the General would arouse him with a shout. Instead of this, Dyer wearily and painfully got to his feet, walked over and quietly took the water-bottle from beside the sleeping boy, and returned carefully without waking him. A small incident, no doubt, but throwing a light on the character of the man whose actions are summed up, in the public mind, as "Dyerism."

E. P. Y.

TALES OF A PILOT SERVICE.

BY SHALIMAR.

I. AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER.

THE river which is the scene of these tales is one of the most dangerous in all Asia. Seen at high water, it is a noble-looking river, a mile and a half wide at its mouth, flowing in a stream which is unbroken from bank to bank. At low water, however, it presents a different aspect — the hidden dangers, which high tide had treacherously concealed, become visible. Mud-banks stand ten to twelve feet out of the water, and the navigable channels have contracted to, in some cases, less than a quarter of a mile. Through these channels the brown muddy current sweeps at a force which reaches eight knots an hour, while swirling eddies will sometimes throw a large vessel athwart the river even against the pressure of her rudder. During spring tides the water will rise and fall as much as twenty-one feet, and a vessel which goes ashore at the top of high water, unless she can be promptly got off, has little chance of surviving through the hours of the following ebb tide. With one part of her suspended on a mud-bank and the water rapidly receding and scouring the mud from under the other part, it is almost a certainty that she will break her back and become a total wreck.

To add to the natural dangers, during the south-west monsoon blinding rain squalls will suddenly blot out the banks of the river, concealing leading marks, beacons, buoys, and lights; while during the early months of spring dense fogs often prevail in the mornings. To cope with all these dangers a highly-trained and efficient pilot service is maintained.

The pilotage extends over a distance of forty miles, and may roughly be divided into two sections—the river itself, and the estuary, which includes the outer bar. From the port, which is twenty-two miles up the river, and which has a bar immediately below it which deeply loaded vessels can cross only at high water, the river winds through a series of narrow channels, with here and there a broad reach. The channel just inside the mouth is the narrowest of all; it runs between the right bank, which there is steep to, and a vast shoal which lies off it. Below the point at the mouth of the river, on which there is a signal station, a spit extends for about three miles, and parallel to this spit there is a deep broad reach called the

Spit channel, which, however, has a nasty cross current. The outer end of this is marked by a light-vessel, and there a right-angled turn leads down to the outer bar, whose depths are constantly varying, as the silt from the river is either deposited or scoured away by the strong tides. The Spit channel affords a welcome anchorage when such is necessary, shallow water on the bar, and narrow channels in the river, making it difficult to anchor elsewhere. The pilot vessel usually lies at anchor six miles off the low palm-fringed coast, and about eighteen miles from the mouth of the river.

To the pilot vessel there came at four o'clock one morning in early March the mail steamer from another important port on the coast. She was well loaded with a valuable cargo, and had about a thousand native deck passengers on board. It was getting on for high water, the flood tide was almost finished, and it was still dark. As she slowed down a boat from the pilot vessel pushed off to her, one of the pilots was soon on board, and the steamer was then headed full speed on her course.

"You are rather late," said the pilot to her commander after he had reached the bridge and the usual greetings had been exchanged. "Better tell the engineer to give her all he can, or we may miss the tide."

"I was afraid of that," the captain agreed. "I sent down orders to let her go all out as soon as you got on board."

The captain of the mail steamer was a frequent trader to the port, and was well known to the pilot. He was deeply religious, and with rare moral courage carried his religion into the daily life of the vessels he commanded. Sailors are very apt to seize on any outstanding characteristic in order to find a nickname, and while respected all over the coast, he was universally known as Holy Joe. His religion has nothing to do with this incident, except that, in the opinion of those who knew him best, it inspired him with courage of a different nature, for he was a daring seaman, his daring amounting almost to audacity at times, and he would take risks that others, who had not his moral equipment, would shun. The pilot, for another reason, was rather inclined to be reckless, a very bad fault in a pilot, and one that few of them possess. Their whole training and responsibilities tend to eliminate this trait, and rather are they wont to inspire confidence by their careful trustworthiness. Recklessness, where found, is, as in this case, usually due to one cause—youth, and this cause is, especially in the East, soon removed. Enough has been told of the characters of both the captain and the pilot to show that, competent officers although both of them were, they were hardly an ideal combination to be rushing full speed in a high-powered steamer

toward the mouth of a dangerous river on a morning that was already inclined to be hazy.

"Do you think we will manage to catch the tide, pilot?" inquired the captain.

"Yes, bar fog," was the reply.

"Fog! I don't see any sign of fog. It seems as clear as a bell; look at the stars overhead."

Resisting the temptation to repeat the time-honoured joke, and realising that humour under the circumstances would be misplaced, the pilot thoughtfully rubbed his hand along the iron rail which ran round the bridge. It was already moist, as if with sweat, a fairly sure indication of coming mist. By this time they had picked up, and were steering for, the light-vessel which makes the entrance to the Spit channel. Four steamers had gone in earlier on the tide, the last one only half an hour before, but there was no sign of any of their lights now. As they approached the light-vessel, the pilot looked in vain for the next set of leading lights. These, when in line, led through the narrow channel on the right bank, just inside the entrance. It was evident that a bank of fog was lying right across the mouth of the river. Shortly afterwards he heard a bell being rung violently, followed by two or three others. At least some of the vessels which had preceded them were at anchor in the Spit channel.

That was the time when the pilot should have come to a definite decision and anchored also. The pilots of those other vessels were more experienced than he, and they certainly would not have anchored there if they could have got in; they had adopted the prudent course in an approach that was full of dangerous cross-currents. Still the pilot was loth to miss the tide, and perhaps a bit too sure of himself. He did take the precaution of ordering the engines to slow, but thought that he would stand in just a little farther and try to pick up the lights. The voice of the tempter at his elbow strengthened him in this idea.

"It will be breaking day in a few minutes, and we may manage to pick up something," suggested the captain, always eager to get on.

They had slowly passed three vessels at anchor, locating them only by the sound of their bells, and the pilot had just made up his mind that it wasn't good enough, and was about to give orders to anchor also, when there was a sudden exclamation from the captain—

"There are the lights, pilot, five on the port bow."

"Good," said the pilot, with a brief glance at the lights. "Full speed ahead."

As he gave the order he also told the man at the wheel to starboard the helm, so as to bring the lights on the other bow, for they had seemed to him somewhat open, and he wanted to run them into line so that they would lead him fairly up the channel. He and the captain then moved over

to the port side of the bridge, and were peering through the mist in the half light to try and pick up the palm-trees on the bank at the mouth of the river, when a startled shout from the chief officer drew their attention to the other side.

"These are not the leading lights, pilot; they are fishing boats; we are nearly on top of them."

"Stop the engines, stand by the anchor," said the pilot, and then gave a gasp of dismay, for, as he watched the fishing boats surging past, he saw, not on the port side at all but broad on the starboard bow, the palm-trees looming through the fog and quite close. Instead of entering the river they were heading straight across the mouth of it for the spit outside. There was only one thing to do, go full speed astern, and the pilot gave the order for it. He almost immediately followed it with another. "Ring her up."

This last order may require a little explanation. The engineer officer in charge of the engine-room usually keeps a little reserve power in hand, and the double ring on the telegraph from the bridge to the engine-room signifies an emergency when every ounce of power is required.

The moments that followed were bitter ones for the pilot. From the way that the nearer objects on the beach appeared to be slipping aft past the farther ones, much as they seem to do when one is in a railway train, he could see that, although the engines were going astern, the vessel had still a lot of headway due to his mad rush full speed ahead when he thought he had seen the leading lights. He doubted if she could be brought up in time, and he knew that if she took the mud there, nothing could save her, for it was now after high water, and in a short time the ebb tide would be coming down like a sluice. In imagination he could already see the decks buckling under them, the terrified stampede of the deck passengers, the difficulty of rescue; for even if the vessels at anchor near them tried to send their boats, these could do almost nothing in the scour of the strong current, and the same thing applied to the vessel's own boats. The fore-deck just immediately below him was packed with coolies, their families, baggage, and cooking pots. Many of the coolies were already awake, and, with their heads muffled up to keep out the chill morning air, were pointing excitedly at the shore. They were totally unaware of their danger: they were merely stirred by the first glimpse of the country of their adoption.

Inwardly he cursed himself for his folly in standing on so far, and to add to his bitterness of mind a loud peal on the bell of the nearest, though invisible, vessel at anchor came across to him through the fog. He envied the pilot of her, *he* had no greater responsibility at the time than to see that

the bell was kept ringing; in fact, he was probably sitting comfortably in the captain's cabin.

During the time, a matter of not many seconds, that these thoughts were chasing each other through his mind, he was keenly watching the beach, which gave the best indication of what the vessel was doing. They were so close that he could almost look down on it. In the foreground the muddy water was lapping against the bank, which was covered with rank grass, with here and there a few stunted bushes; beyond was the signal station, with its tall mast, fringed by a belt of palm-trees, the nearer palms showing quite distinctly, the farther ones melting into the white fog, which lay in a dense mass over the land and all around them. Apparently calm, the only signs of strain about him were where his knuckles were showing white as his hands gripped the iron rail of the bridge like a vice; at the same time he was leaning backward as if with his own strength he was trying to keep the vessel from striking the mud. The calm voice of Holy Joe fell like a sedative on his jangled nerves—

"She will bring up in time, pilot. Providence is on our side."

As he uttered the words, however, the pilot noticed that he gave the telegraph handle still another ring in case the engineer might have yet a little more power up his sleeve. By now, however, the engines were all out; the funnels, bridge rails, and ventilators were shaking and rattling with the powerful vibration of them. The pilot could now see that the vessel had almost lost her headway, but could not tell, for the moment, whether she had brought up on the spit or not, for, although the man at the lead immediately below the bridge was giving a depth of six fathoms, or thirty-six feet, it was a steep shelving bank, and she might easily be aground forward. Suddenly his heart seemed to leap; surely the motion of the objects on the bank was reversed, the nearer objects, the stunted bushes, were drawing forward past the palm-trees; slowly, just perceptibly at first, then more rapidly. The movement was soon confirmed by an exultant yell from the man at the lead, "Going astern, sir."

Inwardly hoping that no other reckless fool like himself, into whom he could barge stern first, was nosing his way up the channel, the pilot quietly and carefully backed out into deep water, then, locating the position of one of the other vessels at anchor by the sound of her bell, he thankfully anchored just astern of her.

"I suppose we can do nothing now," said the captain.

"Only keep the bell ringing forward," replied the pilot. "What about a spot of coffee?" As he spoke he wiped his brow with a handkerchief held in a hand that now decidedly trembled.

"Well, we have lost the tide

after all," remarked the captain dolefully.

"It's a damned long way—I beg your pardon," said the pilot, remembering the character of his companion. "It's a long way better to lose the tide than lose the ship."

II. THE PRIZE SHIP.

During the second week of July 1914 the large cargo steamer *Alesia* of the Hamburg-America Line left Germany for the port referred to in these tales. She passed through the Suez Canal on the 26th July, and signalled off Perim on the 30th. At the outbreak of war there was no naval vessel at the port, but the marine and military authorities looked up the *Alesia* in Lloyd's Register, and discovered that she was fitted with wireless. This was confirmed by those in the port, who were in a position to know, for she had been there before. The authorities then very naturally decided that she would make for a neutral port, probably in the Dutch East Indies, and if she managed to elude our own and the Japanese cruisers, would there intern herself.

The day after war was declared the sailing pilot vessel was withdrawn and replaced by a small, fast, coasting steamer. This steamer could run into the river in the event of her sighting an enemy cruiser, which might attempt to hamper the trade of the port by capturing the pilots who would be on board. On the afternoon of the 12th August, just after a heavy rain squall which had blotted everything out for about an hour had passed over, to the amazement of every one on board, the *Alesia* was sighted close to, standing toward the pilot vessel, and flying the German pilot jack at the fore. The anchor on the pilot vessel was hove up, and she prepared to make a run for it in case the stranger should be armed. She appeared, however, to be quite peaceful, and the first thing that the pilots noticed was that she had no wireless apparatus aloft. She stopped under the pilot vessel's stern in the ordinary way, and a pilot was sent off to her.

Fortunately, the pilot who was on turn for duty, although quite junior, was a man of cool resource, and, moreover, he had a face which had the faculty of concealing all emotion. As he was being pulled across in the boat from the pilot vessel to the steamer, he realised, however, that he would need all his wits about him if he were to carry the job to a successful conclusion. There were two problems to be faced. The first was that the stranger might, after all, be armed with well-concealed guns, that he might intend to try and get up the river to a position from which he could bombard the large oil installation, and thus do tremendous damage before

he would be inevitably sunk by the guns from the forts. The pilot decided that if there were any evidence of this he would run the vessel on to the most dangerous shoal he could find, and take the consequences. The second and more likely case was that the commander of the *Alesia* was not aware that war had broken out, and the pilot's duty would then be to conceal this information, take the vessel up the river, and anchor her under the guns of the nearest fort.

On reaching the bridge of the steamer he discovered that the captain and chief officer were the same as on a previous voyage when he had been the pilot, and the former, in the manner of men making port after a long voyage, was eager for news. The captain and all his officers spoke English, but with the strong American accent which they seem to acquire in Trans-Atlantic vessels.

"I see you have a new pilot boat. Where is the old sailing vessel?" was the captain's first remark after the *Alesia* had been headed on her course.

"She was sunk in collision with a big tramp last week," replied the pilot.

"Well, that's too bad. Any one drowned?"

The pilot nodded his head sadly. "Four pilots and half the crew," he said, following up his remark by a vivid description of the mythical disaster and a scathing criticism of the seamanship of the commander of the tramp steamer.

The captain, after expressing his sympathy, asked for a newspaper, but for obvious reasons the pilot hadn't got one. He, however, invented a typhoon which had wiped out the half of Hong-Kong and an equally disastrous earthquake in South America. He also elicited the information that the *Alesia's* wireless had been dismantled for repairs in Hamburg, and had not been ready when they left—a great inconvenience to them.

"By the way," said the captain, "is there any war in Europe?"

"Never heard of one," said the pilot. "Why?"

"When I left Suez, Austria had sent an ultimatum to Servia over the murder of that Archduke, and Russia was looking real nasty."

"Oh, that fizzled out," said the pilot.

"Well, I guess I'll go below and have a little nap. I haven't had much sleep for the last two days with this darned old monsoon of yours."

Left to himself, the pilot gazed around. He had often been on board of German ships before, but now he noticed things with a new interest. He saw signs of efficiency everywhere: the vessel was well painted, and all her gear was in good condition. The sailors, who were doing odd jobs about the decks, seemed to be a docile, willing lot. They were men of good physique, clean and tidy. All wore the typical small white cap. The strict discipline of the pre-war German mercantile marine was

in evidence. Soon afterwards the chief officer came up on the bridge and entered into conversation with him.

"Was the old man talking to you about war?" he asked.

"He did mention it," the pilot admitted.

"He makes me ill at times. Why, all this about war between England and Germany is newspaper talk, pilot. For one thing, our Socialists wouldn't allow a war, and quite right too. They wouldn't get me to fight for a lot of capitalists."

The pilot readily agreed, although at the moment that the chief officer had interrupted his thoughts, he had been considering ways and means of getting to England to join the New Army, for he had been a keen officer in the local volunteer battalion for years. Could the chief officer have looked into his bag he would have seen, at the bottom of it, well-thumbed copies of 'Field Service Regulations' and 'Infantry Training—1914.'

By this time they were approaching the light-vessel at the entrance to the Spit channel, so the pilot gave instructions to hoist the ship's number and the ensign. After a slight delay this was acknowledged by the answering pennant on the flagstaff of the signal station, and he knew that the fact that the *Alesia* was in the river would be promptly telegraphed up to the port. There was something else, however, to cause him anxiety, and that was the scene on the bank at the entrance to the river. Usually deserted except for the signal station and a few water buffaloes, it had been since the 4th of August, when it was occupied by a double company of Indian infantry, a regular hive of industry. The signal station itself was heavily sandbagged, and trenches had been dug above high-water mark, which would be certain to be manned as they passed. A cluster of white tents stood out in sharp contrast to the dark green of the palms, and, to make matters worse, the clear notes of a bugle came across the water just as they were approaching the point. The pilot did not wait for inquiries: he decided to take the initiative.

"The annual military manœuvres are on," he told the chief officer. "Those fellows like to play at being real soldiers at times."

Beyond passing a remark about the dreariness of the spot and the probable dampness of the trenches, the chief officer, to the pilot's relief, did not appear to be interested. To give point to his words a black squall, a moving mass of wind and rain, came howling up from the sea. It quickly passed over the little camp, completely hiding it from view, and sweeping up the river, shut out everything outside a radius of a hundred yards. The engines were ordered to slow, the hand lead kept going, and they cautiously felt their way up the river until the squall passed as quickly as it had arrived. When the weather

had cleared, the chief officer seemed to have forgotten all about the camp, for he started to yarn about his domestic affairs: he was going to be married at the end of this voyage, also he was to get his first command. Life looked very rosy to him.

A little farther up the river was the examination vessel, a large launch from which representatives of the marine and military authorities examined neutral vessels, and also gave daily a combination of flags to all ships to hoist to enable them to pass the forts. As this vessel had no guns, the pilot was not surprised when she modestly withdrew higher up the river on their approach. Vessels, even in peace time, were not allowed to cross the bar just below the port after dark, and this furnished him with a good excuse for anchoring in the river; so, just as the sun was setting, he brought the *Alesia* up just off the lower fort, and about seven miles below the city.

Soon after they anchored he went into the saloon to dinner, and there met the other officers. With the exception of the chief engineer they were quite an agreeable lot, and all, save that individual, politely carried on the conversation in English. He, however, contributed a number of surly remarks in German, the only occasion on which he spoke English being when the pilot, in explanation of the fact that the searchlight from the fort was playing on them continuously, while higher up the river the ray from another one swept at intervals across the sky, again mentioned the military manœuvres. He then with a sneer suggested that if the British army officials had any sense they would not hold their manœuvres in the rainy season, a remark which contained so much truth in it that the pilot did not try to answer it.

"Our chief engineer has been in the German army," said the captain, but whether he meant the remark as an excuse for that officer's rudeness, or to show that he spoke with authority, the pilot could not guess.

On the plea that it was a warm night, and that in any case he wished to be handy should the vessel sheer heavily at anchor, the pilot declined a stateroom, but had a camp-bed laid out for him on the lower bridge just outside the captain's cabin. About ten o'clock he lay down, having previously warned the chief officer that, owing to the quarantine regulations, he must not lower the gangway ladder, or allow any one on board without permission. All the Germans in the vicinity had been collected and interned during the first two or three days of the war, but there was just a chance that some native in their employ might get to know of the vessel being in the river, and contrive to give a warning. For some time after he had lain down he could hear scraps of a conversation being carried on upon the bridge above him between the chief

engineer and the captain. The former was apparently vehemently trying to drive some argument home, while the captain was placidly endeavouring to refute it.

The pilot had little sleep that night. Every sound in the engine-room caused him to start nervously with the idea that they were opening the sea-cocks. Once or twice when he got up and looked over the side he even imagined that the vessel was deeper in the water; if she were sunk there it would be rather disastrous, as she would partially block the channel. The searchlight from the fort flashed on them incessantly. In the early hours of the morning, however, he dropped off into a troubled sleep, but was wakened at the first streak of dawn by the chief officer.

"There is some one in a large launch alongside, pilot. He wants the gangway lowered."

"That will be the port health officer," said the pilot. "Lower away and let him on board."

He lay on the camp-bed and listened; in the still morning air he could hear the ropes of the gangway ladder tackle running through the blocks, and the ladder itself bumping down the vessel's side, and shortly afterwards the tramp of ammunition boots on the ladder and on the deck. There was a great shuffling of feet, and then—

"Stand at—ease. Stand—easy."

He got up and looked down on the fore-deck. Drawn up in two long lines, one on each side, were two platoons of British infantry. As he stood there the captain came out of his cabin; at last there was a note of alarm in his voice.

"What is the meaning of this, pilot?" he asked.

"I regret to say, captain, it means that your country is at war with mine, and that your ship has been captured."

As he spoke a figure dashed past him; it was the chief engineer making for the engine-room, presumably intent on doing whatever damage he could while he still had a chance. With a quick shout to the military officers who were coming up the iron ladder from the fore-deck to the lower bridge, the pilot rushed along the deck, and, collaring the engineer low, brought him down with a thud just as he was about to enter the engine-room door.

About an hour afterwards a crew drawn from the ships in the harbour came on board, and the vessel was moved up to a permanent berth. Before leaving her the pilot went along to the saloon to bid good-bye to the captain, and on his way he had to pass the chief engineer's cabin. Through the open door, which was guarded by two soldiers, he could see the chief engineer, and stopped for a moment to sympathise with him. The engineer was not apparently in a conversational mood, for his reply was brief and to the point.

"*Schweinhund*," he said.

The captain was very much depressed at the loss of his

ship, and at the prospect of having to spend some considerable time in an internment camp, but he roused himself as the pilot entered the saloon.

"Have you ever played poker, pilot?" he asked.

"Yes, occasionally. Why?"

"Because with that face of yours all you have to do is go across to the States, start right in, and make a fortune. The pilot vessel sunk last week and four pilots drowned—poor fellows; never heard of a war in Europe; military manœuvres —*Gott in Himmel.*"

That was the pilot's first encounter with Germans during the war, but he was destined to have many more. Shortly after this incident he went to England, and before very long he was in France. After being twice wounded he again went into the line, and finally fell riddled by machine-gun bullets while leading a platoon of a famous Highland regiment on the Somme. There he lies in a soldier's grave, while on the mainmast of the old sailing pilot vessel, which has since been replaced by an up-to-date steamer, can be seen a brass plate to his memory.

III. THE PARIAH BRIG.

Many years ago there were two distinct types of sailing vessels trading round the Indian coast. These were known to seafarers as the "country ships," which, although mostly owned by Indians, were officered by Europeans, and had large well-trained Lascar crews, and the "pariahs," which were owned, officered, and manned entirely by natives. Many of the former strove, not without success, to emulate in style, splendour, and discipline, the old East Indiamen, but they have long since disappeared from the face of the waters. The "pariahs" were never so ambitious, but there were many smart little vessels amongst them, and their native crews were generally composed of good seamen. A number of them still survive, but they have deteriorated; year by year they become more shabby and dilapidated; more long splices are seen in their coir running gear, less paint on their sun-dried wooden hulls, and more jagged tears in their copper. In certain trades, which it would hardly pay the steamers to enter, they still seem to pick up a precarious living.

One of those trades is that between the Nicobar Islands—where they load green cocoanuts, using their own boats as lighters—and various ports in India, and up till the time of the war it was a common thing for three or four of them to turn up at the pilot station on one day, usually at the end of the south-west monsoon. They were mostly barques and brigs, and their advent was never very popular, for, apart from the uncertainty as to how long they would take to get up the

river, they were generally rather dirty, and the pilot had to take his own food, and even water, on board. Prior to the war, however, all the pilots had received their earlier training in sailing ships, and took a pride in their ability to handle them. When a number of "pariahs" arrived on the station together they would almost invariably be sailed all the way up the river. Many exciting races took place, and the almost forgotten art of backing and filling a vessel through a narrow channel with the tide, but against a head wind, would often be revived. Most of the younger generation of pilots received their early training in steamers; they know practically nothing about handling vessels under sail, and even if they did, the gear of the "pariahs" and their crews are no longer reliable. Moreover, time is more important nowadays, so now, when a sailing vessel comes to the station, the pilot usually exercises the prerogative given him by the rules of the port, and orders it to anchor until a steam tug can be obtained.

One day in October a tall pile of canvas coming in before the sea breeze was observed from the pilot vessel, and in the afternoon the native brig *Karnul* backed her main yard, and hove-to alongside, awaiting a pilot. The pilot who was on turn, although one of the younger men, knew how to handle a sailing vessel, but still had no desire to spend longer than necessary on board a "pariah." Before going off to her he decided that, as there was a fair wind blowing, and it was flood tide, he would sail her up into the river, but he requested the next pilot who was on turn, and who was making ready to board an incoming steamer, to wireless a message up to town to send a steam tug down to meet him. When going off in the boat he noticed that she was cleaner and smarter-looking than most vessels of her class, but he could not remember having seen her before. Climbing up the short rope ladder he got on board, and was greeted by the master, a tall powerfully-built native, who seemed unable to understand any language which the pilot could speak. He had with him, however, a native of about thirty, who spoke good English, as an interpreter, although he also seemed to carry out the duties of cabin boy. The master received with delight the pilot's decision to sail up into the river, the yards were squared, and a course set up the channel.

The pilot requested that a small awning be spread to keep the sun off him, and this was done. He was also given a chair, and, taking a magazine out of his bag, he settled down to read, glancing up occasionally to see that the brig was kept on her course. About four o'clock he was interrupted by the interpreter, who said—

"Master like a cup of tea, sir."

Rather surprised, for this was unusual on board a

"pariah," the pilot said that "master" would, and soon afterwards the interpreter brought a tray with tea, sugar, tinned milk, and biscuits. This was the first time that he noticed that there was something vaguely familiar both about the face of the interpreter and about his speech.

The wind holding favourable, they made good progress, passed the light-vessel, and entered the Spit channel. Here the pilot had his hands full, for there was a strong current setting across it on to a shoal, but, by skilful handling, he managed to weather the point on which stood the signal station, and then stood on up the river. The wind soon afterwards fell away a little, but there was still enough to keep the sails full. The *Karnul* was quite a fast little vessel, with good lines and a large spread of canvas, and with the last drain of the flood tide under her, was gliding along at a good pace. The pilot sat in his chair contentedly smoking and watching the bank slipping past. Occasionally he would glance aloft to see that all the yards were properly trimmed and the sails drawing. On the port hand the rice-fields extended away to the misty horizon, broken here and there by belts of jungle on the banks of the intersecting creeks. The sun was fast dropping, and deepening the yellow of the ripening paddy, and finally sunk, a ball of fire, its last rays flashing on the gilded cones of the small pagodas which were dotted here and there about the fields. In the twilight the sails changed in tint from white to dark grey, but it was short, and soon they were showing black against the glittering stars.

About an hour afterwards the ebb tide came down so strongly that the brig could no longer make headway, so, being then in a broad reach, the pilot sheered her in toward the shore out of the track of shipping, and ordered the anchor to be let go and the sails clewed up and furled. The interpreter took some of the food which the pilot had brought on board to the galley to be cooked, and it was while the latter was eating this meal that he suddenly remembered where he had met the native before. During the war he had been a pilot of a different kind, for he had gone to England and joined what was then the Royal Flying Corps. Quickly getting his wings, he went to France, and after a brief but exciting career, he was brought down behind the German lines, and was for two years a prisoner of war in various prison camps. It was in the last of these that he had met the interpreter, and that individual had always been a mystery to him. Obviously he did not belong to any of the fighting races of India, and was not a prisoner of war, but seemed to hang about the camp and do odd jobs. On several occasions the pilot had heard him talk German, and believed that he was there to spy upon the British officers.

Certainly he got several of them, who became familiar with him, into trouble, but the pilot, having lived in the East, did not make that mistake. Just before the Armistice, Putriah, for that was the name he went under, disappeared. When in Germany he had been dressed in a nondescript khaki uniform, and as he was now in native dress it is little wonder that the pilot had not at first recognised him. He had little fear that Putriah would know him. In those days he wore a moustache, now he was clean shaven again, and besides, he was much stouter.

Although the brig was fairly clean, the pilot did not fancy sleeping in the saloon, so ordered a sail to be laid out on deck, and this made a comfortable bed. It was a glorious night, with a light warm breeze, and after lying for some time listening to the wavelets lapping against the side of the brig, he fell asleep.

About four o'clock in the morning he woke up, and glancing forward, noticed that some one was waving a lantern slowly over the side. Soon afterwards he heard voices, and the sound of two boats being rowed toward the brig. He got up, strolled along the deck, and met Putriah.

"What do these boats want?" he asked.

"The poor fellows would like some green cocoa-nuts, master," was the reply. "They say that they are very dear in the bazaar."

In addition to their other duties, the pilots are *ex officio* customs officers, and while their responsibilities in this respect are mainly nominal, they are supposed to see that no cargo is discharged in the river outside the recognised discharging places. The pilot was wondering whether he should interfere, or merely close his eyes to such an apparently harmless proceeding, when his cogitations were interrupted by a stentorian hail from the other side of—

"Brig ahoy!" It was the steam tug which he had ordered.

"Hullo!" he shouted.

"When do you want to start in?"

"We can start right away," said the pilot. "The flood will have made before we get the anchor up."

Turning to Putriah, who by this time had been joined by the master and several of the crew, he told him to heave the anchor up and take the tug's hawser. This order was received by the master with what appeared to be a vehement protest.

"What does he say?" asked the pilot.

"He says, master, that he does not want a tug. He wants to stay here until daylight and sail up the river."

"Tell him that it doesn't matter much what he wants," said the pilot pleasantly. "We will get under weigh and tow up at once."

On being told this the master flew into a violent temper, and waving his arms about, was

evidently protesting vigorously when the pilot cut him short, and said curtly—

"Look here, I have had quite enough of this; tell him that I will give him five minutes to start heaving aweigh. If he doesn't start by then, I will lash the tug-boat alongside, slip your cable, leave your anchor on the bottom of the river, and tow you up to town."

Putriah himself issued the orders, and led the indignant master into the saloon. As soon as they got under weigh the pilot went aft, told the man at the wheel to steer after the tug, and leant against the taffrail smoking a cigarette. In the saloon below he could hear Putriah and the master, but their positions seemed to be reversed, for it was the former who was speaking sternly, and the master was much more subdued. The pilot was rather mystified; he wondered if this could possibly be the Putriah of the prison camp, and then he remembered a strange hobby which he had taken up as a prisoner of war—the collecting of finger-prints. He had dozens of them which he had obtained from fellow-prisoners, all certified, neatly pasted into a book, and labelled. Amongst them were those of Putriah, which he had obtained by a subterfuge, and he wondered if he could obtain another. Just then Putriah approached him full of conciliation, and asked, very politely, if he would like a cup of tea.

"Yes, please," said the pilot. "And if you will get me a bucket of water I will have a wash. You might take my bag down to the saloon, and I will wash there."

It was now daylight, and all the man at the wheel had to do was follow the tug. The pilot went below, and after having a wash, he asked Putriah if he had any boot blacking, as he had got his boots wet coming off in the boat. Putriah, apparently ready to do anything to please, went off for the blacking, and when he had gone, the pilot took the magazine from his bag, opened it in the middle, and folding it back, placed it on the deck some distance from the bag. He put his feet one after another on a bench, and when Putriah had finished the boots, the pilot asked him to rub the leather above one of his big toes, and try to soften it, as he had a painful corn. He then proceeded to pack his bag, and as he did so he said—

"Chuck me that magazine over, but don't lose the place."

To do this Putriah had to press the edges, and as he handed the magazine to the pilot, the latter was pleased to see some finger-prints, and more especially that of the thumb, on the margin.

They arrived in the harbour, and after handing the brig over to the berthing officials, the pilot went on shore. On arriving at his bungalow he found his book of finger-prints, took out the page with those of

Putriah, and after a bath and breakfast, he got out his car and ran down to the office of his friend, the commissioner of police.

"The first thing to do obviously is to compare the prints," said that official. "We will send them down to the finger-print expert."

Calling a peon, he wrote a note and despatched it with the prints. The pilot then told him about the boats coming alongside in the river, and also about the scene made by the master when he had given orders to weigh the anchor.

"That looks as if your friend Putriah had turned to smuggling," said the commissioner. "It might be opium or cocaine, or both, although I cannot remember any of the native vessels being caught at it. However, that is a job for our friends, the Customs, and I shall warn them."

Just then the peon returned with a note—undoubtedly the finger-prints were identical.

"I will have friend Putriah carefully watched," said the commissioner. "If anything of interest happens I will let you know. Good-morning. Many thanks."

One evening two or three days later the pilot strolled into the club and saw, standing at the bar, the commissioner and two other men. On seeing the pilot he motioned him to an empty table, and soon joined him. After ordering drinks he said—

"Well, we safely jugged your friend Putriah and the master to-day—two of the most dangerous anarchists in India."

He went on further to relate that, warned by him, the Customs officers had thoroughly searched the brig. They had found no opium or cocaine, and were about to give up the search when one of them happened to ask about some green cocoa-nuts which were stowed apart from the cargo in a small hatch below the saloon. The ever-ready Putriah explained that they were special ones, which were to be used for seed. One of the officers casually picked up a cocoa-nut and found it to be as heavy as lead. A police guard was put on board, and the cocoa-nut taken up to the arsenal, where it was found to contain a powerful bomb. The outer skin had been cut to allow the bomb to be inserted, and very cleverly closed again. There were about a hundred of these bombs on board.

At the subsequent trial, when the pilot went into the witness-box, Putriah was apparently unconcerned. He even contrived a little smile of welcome. The second question put by the prosecutor to the pilot was—

"You were in 1918 a prisoner of war at ——, a prison camp in Germany?"

Putriah's unconcern vanished. He gazed keenly at the pilot, and a sickly expression came over his face. For the first time he recognised his real conqueror.

THE AFRICAN SCORPION.

BY GAID SAKIT.

MANY people doubtless know well the picturesque story in the Old Testament in which Rehoboam says unto his people, "My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise with scorpions," and it remains to those who have met with chastisement by the whip to gauge the intensity of pain from a similar infliction from scorpions. As a boy at school I experienced the former in the natural course of events, and later in life I met with the latter, and I can well imagine the effect which Rehoboam's threat had upon his people. I have only been stung by one scorpion at a time, and I shudder to think of the pain from the beast in the plural. Western countries have many things to be thankful for, and I reckon that freedom from insect pests is one of their greatest assets.

Now the scorpion is a curious beast in many ways. For one thing, it does not lay eggs as one would expect, but is viviparous—*i.e.*, produces its young alive, and carries them on its back until they are sufficiently old to fend for themselves. To look at it is like a miniature lobster, varying in size from one inch to three inches in length from head to tip of tail, though I believe that in West Africa they are to be found as big as six inches in length. But size does not necessarily affect the power of its sting, which is contained in a bag in its tail. When it is likely to meet with danger it proceeds with its tail curled up over its head, and looks rather like a miniature ship under full sail. Another rather surprising thing about our friend is the great speed at which he can travel in proportion to his size, and his marvellous ability to find cover. I have killed them by fifties in a hole, and I cannot say that I have any feelings for them except of loathing and reverence for their sting. And of that I have a profound reverence! as so many others have who sojourn during the rains south of latitude 15° in Africa.

In the dry weather one never sees them, for they are busy about their lawful occasions preying on smaller insects in the gaping fissures of the ground, but when the first rains come then begins the scorpion season. For, like most things with life except fishes, the scorpion objects to getting wet, and on the first trickle of water entering his fissure he makes for the open country and another form of shelter, and, moreover, he has to be quick about it, for the rain is of the "bucket" variety, and leaves no time for meditation.

So it is that he makes for

one's bungalow and the shelter afforded thereby. My bungalow from all outward view was impervious to every form of insect and crawler except sandflies, for it was surrounded by fine-meshed mosquito wire buried in cement at the verandah level and turned in and secured under the eaves of the roof, so that it would appear impossible for any scorpion to intrude. Yet this was hardly the fact, for last rains I used to kill over thirty a night for many nights, and my bungalow was not nearly so badly infested as many others.

On closer inspection I found many possible places of entry, such as the cracks above and below the doors of the verandah, places where the mortar had fallen away from the lintels of the doors, and holes in the wire-netting under the eaves. How the scorpion finds these holes and cracks I cannot imagine, but find them he does mighty quickly, and evidently passes the "khubar" (news) to his friends. I never actually saw a scorpion entering the bungalow.

Last year I was sharing my bungalow with C——. It was his first experience of rains and scorpions, and it takes a sting to treat the season with due respect. I had been lucky the season before and only seen others stung, and I fear I had never failed to be somewhat amused, but that is so often the case when one is not a sufferer oneself.

One sticky night in July I had my angereeb—the native pattern bed—put on the south-east side of the verandah so as to get what breeze there might be. At that time of year the nights are often sticky to begin with until the rain breaks and a cool breeze springs up to drive one under the blankets. It must have been about 2 A.M. when I leant out of bed to pull up my blankets, which had fallen over the end of the angereeb. Then I got it! It seemed like a red-hot needle jammed into the cushion of my thumb. I had no permanganate of potash very handy, and it was an inky black night, and before I could walk to my bedroom I had to make certain that there were no more scorpions lurking in my slippers. This took a little time, so that by the time I had groped my way to my bedroom and managed to light a shamadan I could feel the poison spreading up my arm. Having tied a handkerchief tourniquet round my wrist, I dabbed the puncture with ammonia, and went back to deal with the brute. By the light of a flickering candle and with one aching arm, I carefully inspected my blankets, taking them up by the corners and looking back and front. Yes, there he was, lying curled up in a fold of the top blanket, and a scrunch disposed of my tormentor. I then made a very careful inspection of all the bedding, and found two more—one under my pillow and a second under the mattress. Having dealt with them successfully I crawled back into

bed again, and thought of sleep, but not a wink had I for over four hours. It is a most extraordinary kind of pain—one cannot put a finger on it. The actual wound is not over sore, yet the pain seems to be all over the body; it will not allow one to remain still in any position for more than half a minute, and try as I would I could not get comfortable. I got up and walked about the verandah, and it still ached; I sat down, and it drove me to my feet; I lay down, and I wanted to get up again immediately. The hours dragged by, and in those hours I swore death and damnation to every scorpion alive, dead, and unborn! My ammonia was stale and the tourniquet useless, and there was nothing for it but to grin and bear it. And all through those weary hours I wondered how many more of the fraternity were crawling up the legs of the angereeb!

When the sun rose I felt too rotten to go out, and at about 7 A.M. managed to get some sleep. This was after my boy had brought my tea and I had told him of the fatality, and after much sympathy and *kalam* (talk), in which he averred that I should be *aiyan khallas* (very ill) all day, I managed to impress upon him that in future he was entirely responsible for my immunity from scorpions during the night season. My words evidently had a good effect, for in spite of his "Hadr Genabak" (All right, sir, which usually means nothing at all), I never had any cause for complaining of the presence of scorpions. However, he, doubtless, found a good many in the bedding when I was out.

C—— was still very bleary-eyed when I told him, and besides he was busy cracking a ginger-nut and, of course, smiled at my misfortune. I will not say he laughed; it was too early!

"A war starts this evening," said I, "and you and I will have to go round the bungalow after sundown and strafe these fiends."

"Leave it to the boys," replied C——; "there are enough of them falling over each other to kill a few *agrabs* (scorpions) every evening."

And so the war started. C—— was not very keen at first; in fact, not nearly so keen as my *suffragi* (house-boy). However, that night after a sundowner, we each took a shamadan and went the rounds. We started with the side door by opening it gently in case any should fall off the top. Then the door-latch—probably a couple lurking in the slot into which the lock fits. Then the lintels of the doors—perhaps a couple lying curled up in the corner of the mosquito wire. Scrunch! Next the walls, to find a few unsuspecting brutes in the indentations of the mortar, the shutters, window-sills, dining-room shutters and doors—yes, a couple in the crack of the hinges—walls again—shouts of "*agrab!*"—a scrunch. The bathroom; a big one on the ceiling necessi-

tating a polo-stick to deal effectively with it and not to leave too big a stain on the whitewash. Back door, store cupboard, every nook and cranny, not once but twice, to make sure that there was no double-crossing. At the end of the hunt the bodies were swept together and counted, and on that first night after my sting, the bag according to my diary was thirty-five.

As the days of the war went on so we were continually finding new places where they lurked, until quite a small assortment of tools were in nocturnal use. A polo-stick for the high-flyers was a god-send, while a cold chisel for the floor merchants and "mortar crackers" left very little to chance. And besides, the head of the cold chisel made such a delightful noise as it descended on the head of the *agrabs*. A pair of very fine pincers and a nail file were also quite invaluable to extract them from the door frames. These "lurkers" in the door frames were by far the hardest to kill, for they were in their element. At first they "escaped our notice lying hid," as Liddell and Scott translates the verb λανθάνω, but after constant and minute inspection it was possible to espy the two claws protruding very slightly beyond the door frame. Here was where the pincers played their part. C—— would hold the candle in front of the scorpion, and I would try and nip his nippers and pull him out, holding the nail file the while in my other hand in case of failure, when I contrived to plunge the sharp end of the file into his back. The satisfaction in drawing him out of his hiding-place with the nippers was great indeed; but I admit it was seldom successful, and by the time I had failed with the pincers it was often too late to hope for a death with the file. Having failed with the tools, it was sometimes possible to dislodge them by pouring water down the crack from the top of the door frame.

Every failure, however, taught us some new method and ruse, until we found that placing a dead brother opposite a lair often enticed out the living, for scorpions are no respecters of their own dead. Also we found that, by making a very light noise with the nail file on the lintel, they often popped out their claws to make an easier target for the pincers. In crannies of this sort they lie up waiting for any game, such as crickets or beetles, who are fools enough to crawl up the wall, and the noise evidently hoodwinked them into thinking of crickets for dinner. So we went on bagging twenties and thirties for many days until C—— himself got stung, when the bag materially increased through his frenzied efforts to annihilate the whole lot. The tables were turned on that wet Sunday in July, for I had grown somewhat apathetic, and had contented myself with one inspection and

then taken to my long chair and a book; but for the rest of the season C—— became the ardent destroyer and I his lieutenant.

I shall not forget that Sunday evening's amusement for many a long day. We had had a dull day, confined to the ten acres of bungalow land, which was over ankle-deep in mud of a type which would have been a credit to the Somme battlefield in the winter of '17. We had worked quite hard cutting, stripping, and planting cuttings of henna, oleander, and sesu. I had my bath first, and was sitting in my room writing my mail letter, while C—— sang rapturously in the dark brown canal water which served for a bath. I must add that C—— was a very musical man, being the owner of many diverse types of noise makers, including a voice, a monkey, a motor-bike, an accordion with a few notes present, and a loud-speaking gramophone, which played an excellent tune called "Let me linger longer in your arms." The alliteration pleased me, and I liked to think there were some "arms" somewhere in the world.

A few minutes later the rapturous singing ceased suddenly, and C—— let out an oath which could have been heard in Khartum. It was quite certain what had happened to him! I found poor C—— sitting in his birthday suit on the edge of the bath nursing his foot.

"Where have you got it?" I asked.

"The —— —— brute stung me in the ball of my toe."

"But how did he do it? Didn't you look on the floor before you stepped out?"

"Of course I did," he replied, rather snottily I thought, "but the —— —— was in my slipper."

"Well, you are a mutt!" said I. "Why didn't you shake your slippers before you put them on?"

"I only had my blinking feet in them five minutes ago," was his answer in between curses and groans.

Poor C—— was rather bad. I cut the place and rubbed in permanganate of potash, and tied a tourniquet round his ankle as tight as I could, but the poison soon spread up his leg into his groin, and for an hour and a half he lay on my bed letting forth the most frightful oaths and curses. No censor would allow me to repeat them! There was only one thing to do, and that was to fill him up, and this I managed to do so successfully that by 9 P.M. he was comatose and quite happy to hobble to his angereeb supported by George the monkey sitting on his shoulder.

From that Sunday onwards there was renewed war. Heaven help any scorpion that crossed C——'s path! We found a new cache of them one evening near the side door. C—— spotted them while looking for high-flyers—tens of twenties of them lying on the rafters. Their destruction proved rather a problem, for they were in such

an inaccessible place. However, we found the solution. I, being the tallest, held my candle as high as I could until the flame just touched the rafter; C—— a few feet away held his in the same way, and I gradually moved towards him, driving the scriggling scorpions with my flame. When they found themselves between two fires then the fun began, and we had to be exceedingly wary lest they should fall down the backs of our shirts. There would be a slight noise and a couple would flop down from the rafters, and without moving our candles we contrived to scrunch them on the floor. Of course many escaped, but by the same token many also died. The rafters literally rattled with their scurrying legs, and we never failed to make a good bag from that particular spot.

As the war progressed—and it would be hard to estimate the keenness and efficiency of C—— after his sting—their numbers did gradually decrease until we practically defeated them by cementing up every crack and hole in the bungalow. This took two Sundays to do, I doing the right sides of the doors and windows, and C——, luckily being left-handed, managed the others. This was most effective, for it kept our friends in the open, just as the efficient stopping of earths produces a hunt. Thereafter we could meet them on the same ground, and had we been able to cement the places up earlier we should not have suffered so much. I had tried to persuade my boy to take on the job as soon as we obtained the cement, but with the characteristic lack of initiative of natives he informed me that it was not his *shughl* or work, and besides he was not an *osta* or master in the art, and therefore would not try, so it lay with the clever *meffetishin—i.e.*, inspectors—to do the dirty work, while the servants were content to applaud when it was finished. How often, I wonder, have I told a native to do some silly little thing, and been met with the reply, "Ma barifu," which being interpreted is, "I don't know how to," and after I myself have done the silly little thing been told, "Waallahi, enta shartir" ("By God, you are clever!") I suppose all white men who deal with black races find the same thing, and therein lies the sole consolation.

That same week George the monkey got stung. It was a pathetic sight. The poor little chap seemed to wilt, and I hardly expected that he would survive, being only six to eight months old. Also we could not find where he had been stung except that he kept his right foot in his mouth. However, he got over it, and I doubt if our administration of whisky and crushed aspirin really saved him as we hoped at the time.

It is altogether a bad time of year, because snakes come out too, and though I saw only two or three, the natives had a healthy reverence for them when taking water over sun-

cracked land. In July and August the commonest reason for a native's absence from work is *hua masik agrab—i.e.*, he has taken a scorpion. All the servants get stung, and, it seemed, regularly and invariably when we had a party. I remember my *sais* coming in one evening holding a stripped chianti bottle in his hand, which was full to the brim with writhing scorpions! He informed me that the *agrabs* were *battal khallas* (very bad) in the stable, and he thought I would like to see how bad! At the time I was suffering from "scorpionitis," and told him to clear out with his bag before he dropped it on the floor.

It is no exaggeration to say that one does get scorpions on the brain, literally and metaphorically. For instance, this happened to me one day. I used to put my helmets and terai on the top beam of the verandah, and one morning went out wearing the terai. Over two hours later I called in at the office, and threw down my terai on the table, and in so doing the inner hat parted slightly from the outer, and to my horror I spied a scorpion. Very carefully parting the layers I found four of them curled up round the crown of the terai, with only one thickness between me and their stings, which, though probably sufficient, was none too far away! The very next day my *sais* came in after lunch and reported something wrong in the stables, and I took up my polo helmet, had a look inside after the previous day's experience, and walked out. On coming back I threw the helmet on the verandah, and just happened to hear the familiar noise of a dropping *agrab*, and again I saw three of them in the centre of the topee, and about to scramble up into the lining. I allowed them to do this because I wanted to see how I could have overlooked them before going out. They were under cover in no time, crawling into the interstices afforded by the buckram corrugations which allow of ventilation between the lining and the cork of the helmet. Without a minute inspection one certainly would not notice them. In the latter case I think I was nearer a sting in the head than I had been the previous day.

They are an infernal nuisance, and one can never be too careful or look too closely, and personally I always made my boy put on a coat before I did so myself, for by that means I knew there would be no *agrabs* in it. One cannot afford to forget for one minute their presence abroad, and there are many who have had cruel experiences, as, for example, a certain man who mounted his pony having a scorpion in his shorts. But that is another story.

THE MYSTERY OF THE *HIBERNIA*.

THE homeward voyage of that popular single-class ship the *Hibernia* was enlivened and the curiosity of her passengers strongly tickled by an incident. A young lady fell overboard. There was no mystery about that. And the usual routine followed. A number of people shouted "Man overboard!" others swooned away, others threw over life-buoys. One rather bright but futile bird, anxious to help, discharged a deck-chair into the Red Sea. Several others followed suit. And a moiety ran about calling for hen-coops and hatch-covers, but modern ships do not seem to carry any. The sea-boat was immediately called away, and as soon as way was somewhat off the *Hibernia*, she hit the water with such a thump that the false teeth of the mate (or as we call him now, the First Officer), who was in command of her, came unshipped. This, however, passed unnoticed, and the boat disappeared into the darkness of a very dark night. In about half an hour she returned bringing the lady, insensible.

Now this was all straightforward and above-board. There was nothing remarkable or mysterious in it. It had often happened before, and will happen again.

But the boat's crew reported finding a male passenger clinging to the same buoy with the young lady. Now this was surprising, because rescuers are usually seen departing over the bulwarks on their errands of mercy, and no one had seen this one go. Still the night was very dark, and it was just possible for a modest sort of fellow to do good by stealth, if really set on it, in this way.

Where the mystery came in was in this.

The man must, of course, have arrived back at the ship in the rescuing boat. There was ample evidence from her crew, but more especially from a quartermaster who had helped him into the boat, administered brandy to him, conversed with him, and finally seen him leave the boat, climb the ladder, and disappear into the ship through a brilliantly lighted entry-port. At this entry-port were gathered several persons, the captain being one of them, and both he and they stoutly denied having seen the man pass them. His identity was therefore a mystery, as well as his method of passing into a well-lighted crowded ship, not only unrecognised but unnoticed. The fact that the boat—an open one, of course—passed along more than half the length of the ship before reaching the ladder, and was under the eager gaze of many scores of passengers clustered

along the bulwarks, only added to the puzzlement of all on board. The only person who could have solved the matter chose to remain silent. And a secret it remains to this day for all on board the *Hibernia*, with the exception of two fellow-passengers who were let into it later during the voyage, and a third — myself — who shared it some months afterwards.

I have often resented never being told how rabbits are produced from top-hats, or packs of cards dwindle before my very eyes to nothing, or billiard balls are exuded from the conjurer's anatomy. I think it very mean and petty on the conjurer's part. I shall not follow his example, but set forth here in the words of the mystery man just exactly what happened and how it happened. He desires his identity to remain undiscovered, so I will call him William; and the following are *ipsissima verba* of William on the matter.

"We were coming up the Red Sea," continued William, "on a fearfully hot night, following breeze, not a breath stirring on board, and all that. A regular bender of a night. I had never spoken to her, but I had noticed her at meal-times and sometimes on deck. Well, it was nearing bed-time, about half-past nine, the time they let one on deck in pyjamas. I had found a nice place by the rail for my mattress, where there was a little draught of air, and I was longing for the bell to strike so as to go below and get out of my clothes. On the deck above me they were dancing in spite of the heat. I wondered how they managed to do it. I was leaning over the rail, looking down at the water sliding past and longing to jump in and get cool.

"Just at that moment there came a hail from above me—the bridge, I thought. I wasn't very interested in it, and yet listened again for it. It came again, much louder and clearer this time. 'Man overboard!' The cry came so pat upon my longing for a plunge, it might have been an answer to a prayer, or a direct incitement by Providence to do the very thing I wanted to.

"A life-buoy hung at my knee. I lifted it from its hooks, clasped it tight, and went over the top. I had jumped and was half-way there when I thought of sharks. I was still thinking of them when I hit the Red Sea. I didn't go far under, owing to the buoy. I came to the surface within a few feet of the great wall of sliding hull. Sharks vanished from my mind: another subject took their place —propeller blades. In the docks at the port of embarkation I had noticed a large board hanging to the ship's quarter. On it ran the legend, 'Beware of the twin-screws.' At the time this did not seem to concern me. It did so now, however. All this in a flash. I kicked out lustily with my

legs, so as to get a little away from the ship. The roar of waters, mightily threshed, grew momentarily fiercer. It had in it the boom of a great mill-wheel, but a hundred times its fierceness. Now for it! I clutched and twined round my buoy; and then a cleaving smashing rush—no words can describe the awful sound a propeller blade makes so near one's ear,—and that danger was over. I was now in the maelstrom. A 15,000-ton ship driven at speed through water leaves a considerable pother behind her. I was drawn into this. The fun was sharp, but luckily short. I was buffeted, sucked down, thrown up, boxed this way and that. My breath held. I still clutched my buoy, and at length once more floated clear on smooth but still hissing water, very phosphorescent. Then the hiss died down, the sparks died out, and I looked my last at the *Hibernia*, for the darkness just then swallowed her at one gulp. Darkness hid the sky, the horizon, the water about me. I might have been floating in space, and there was nothing even to feel, for the sea was just about the temperature of my body, and I didn't even feel wet. It did seem a little odd to be watching a departing ship from the Red Sea instead of *vice versa*. There was a long oily swell: I could feel the slow and gentle rhythm of it.

"Remembering, however, what I was there for, I let out a yell as soon as I had breath to do so. It seemed a foolish futile thing to expect to find any one in that thick darkness, and I was the more surprised when I was answered and from quite close by a feeble but unmistakably human pipe. Towards it I urged my life-buoy, and presently felt it tilt and dip as an unseen hand laid hold of it. I told the hand to get its owner inside the buoy as soon as possible. To this came a snuffling response, but no action. I had made up my mind that I was dealing with one of the Lascar crew. I was unwilling to be grappled by him, so, keeping the buoy between us, I slid my hand round its circumference, felt another hand, passed on warily up an arm, meeting two or three bangles and a wrist-watch *en route*, felt a neck and a necklace, and wandered farther into hair and several combs. Seizing the hair, I dipped the head under water, brought it up inside the buoy, pulled the arms up, hung them outside, and made all snug. There was no opposition. But when the spluttering was done, a woman's voice said, 'Oh, you did hurt my head.' I apologised and explained. There was no rejoinder. We were both rather full of Red Sea and short of breath.

"Presently a drowsy voice said—

"'I suppose there are no watchmakers actually near here, are there?'

"'Not in the immediate

neighbourhood, so far as I know,' I replied.

"'That's a pity. My watch'll want looking to after all this. Aunt Amy's things are always good.'

"'She gave it you in a present?' I hazarded. I felt that chattiness was the line.

"'*As* a present—yes,' came the voice—that of rather an acid sleep-talker.

"Sharks—I had forgotten about them. They recurred again. I wished they hadn't. I felt that my legs dangled a great deal more than desirable. I wished I could curl them up out of harm's way round my neck. Did they—sharks, not legs—always follow ships continuously in the Red Sea? Or did they just give them a look-in occasionally? I recollected seeing a dead horse dropped overboard in these waters. The sharks had him before we had left him a hundred yards astern. A nasty sight, all dorsal fins and foam and blood. True, there had been none visible about us as we lay in Aden harbour two days ago, and lots of little boys were diving for pennies. Some one had said that one of them had been taken not long before, leg bitten clean off, and in Suez sharks were always to be seen cruising round every ship, and were caught sometimes. No—on the whole these reflections were not comfortable. Again, could one hear a shark coming, or did he just take your leg off without any warning? Better, anyway, to be taken kicking than passive, so I pulled up my legs and kicked. But that's tiring work.

"The sleep-talker resumed—

"'You're making a lot of noise. D'you want a crowd to collect?'

"'I was rather trying to keep the crowd away,' I replied.

"'I can't see any one about,' she continued rather testily. 'I can't see anything. Not even you. Who are you?'

"'From the *Hibernia*. Who are you?' I said.

"'I'm not anybody. Nor are you. We died a short time ago. I don't know exactly how long ago—and I don't know how I died.'

"'People don't,' I replied. 'The survivors know, of course. But who *were* you then?'

"'I was Mary Seton. I sat next my aunt, Aunt Amy, you know, and she sat next the captain. Perhaps you noticed us?'

"Now how had Mary Seton come to tumble overboard? Most certainly I had noticed her—every one did—and a less headlong type of beauty I could not have conceived. And her aunt was noticeable too—a Madonna-like person, very composed. Poor aunt — how was her composure standing it now?

"'Also of Mary Monica,' burbled on the quiet sleepy voice at my elbow, 'only daughter of the above, who died at sea, aged 19 years and 10 months—that's how Aunt Amy will have it put up.'

"I left her spinning epitaphs, and resumed kicking. When I had finished, I asked her whether she was feeling sleepy, and advised her to try and keep awake.

"'Look out for the boat,' I said. 'They'll be sending one back for us soon.'

"'I'm not feeling exactly sleepy,' she replied. 'Only all muzzy in my head, and it hurts so. Would you mind passing your hand over it ever so gently just to feel if there's anything wrong there?'

"'Yes,' I said. 'I'll feel my way up your arm if you don't mind. I'll feel ever so gently.'

"Poor Mary Seton! No wonder she was muzzy. My fingers traced a long jagged scalp wound, and gently as I did so, I felt the head wince and heard a sharp in-drawing of her breath. The warm blood was still oozing from it on to my fingers. The cause was obvious. On such a hot night as this, every porthole would have out its wind-scoop, and any one falling from deck would be almost certain to hit one. She had been lucky not to have hit hers harder. I explained this.

"'I think you must have hit your head very slightly when you fell—painful, but nothing to worry about—nothing that the doctor, or your aunt for that matter, can't put right. It's the salt water that makes it so painful.'

"For the first time during our desultory conversation she woke up and spoke eagerly.

"'Will it show when it's healed? I mean will there be any scar?'

"Ah, woman! I touched you there. Vanity! vanity! dead or alive, all is vanity! On receiving my assurances, she resumed her drowsy chat.

"'I suppose that's what killed me, then. I'm certain I didn't just die in the ordinary way, and I know I wasn't drowned, because I've never been in the water, although my mouth seems full of salt.'

"I let her maunder on. With one hand on the life-line of the buoy and a very little treading water, I found myself well able to keep afloat. I took a good look round. Hours seemed to have passed since we had seen the last of *Hibernia*. By now, of course, any search must have been given up. The boat would have returned to the ship long ago, and she would have proceeded on her voyage. It wasn't for a boat that I looked, but I had an idea that ships always carried a patent buoy on the bridge, which could be dropped at once, and which on striking the water showed a light. It was this that I had looked for, and was still looking for. But the *Hibernia* either didn't carry one of these buoys, or they had forgotten to drop it, and therefore the possible chance of its guiding a boat to somewhere near us was quite absolutely nil. One could rule it clean out of one's

thoughts, and abandon any foolish hope of being found. But showing and disappearing as we rose on the crest or sunk into the trough of the silent invisible swell, was one very faint star. I judged it to be well down almost on the horizon, and sometimes it looked to be on the sea. It was the sole visible feature, and therefore comforting; it relieved the void. But as stars went, it was a poor enough affair.

"'But they don't send boats for souls, do they?' My companion had resumed her talk.

"'Of course they do,' I said. 'How could souls get anywhere?'

"'Why,' she objected, 'they just float about in space like us till they grow wings and become angels, but that might take ages.'

"We were apparently entering the Realm Psychological, when an interruption occurred. Without sound or other warning, and not growing gradually on our vision, but bursting on our eyeballs with an intolerable glare, a boat! Its oars moving up and down, up and down, like the legs of some great black beetle, a man sharply silhouetted standing in the bows, a flare in his raised hand, and flakes of fire dropping from it into the sea. She was not heading towards us: she would miss us by hundreds of yards, and we were hundreds of yards beyond the radius of light. The flare was already dying out. But on that totally silent night one good shout and salvation! What easier? I gathered my breath, put all my strength behind the effort, and let fly. A feeble croak not ranging half the boat's distance from us was all the result! Treading water, kicking for sharks, and small talk had done me in.

"'Scream!' I croaked at my companion. 'Scream!' I shook her by the elbow.

"'I can't,' came the drowsy reply. 'I'm dead.'

"'You jade!' I gasped out.

"Then the light went out, the boat with it, and my hopes with both.

"'Was that heaven?' came in an awe-struck murmur.

"'Yes,' I said. 'And we might have got in if you had screamed.'

"'No one screams to get into heaven.'

"Honestly, I could have struck her. If the boat appeared again I resolved to pinch her till, dead or alive, she howled again.

"A fairly miserable silence followed. Argument with deceased would, I felt, be a waste of breath, and of that I hadn't overmuch to spare. I was beginning to expect dawn, and a day afloat in the Red Sea—no hats, nothing to drink (I was already parched), and the slow consequences. Sharks might appear as friends then.

"Then as suddenly as before the boat burst upon us, heading our way, but a long way off,

now seen, now in the trough, and much too far off to try pinching yet. I watched her slow approach. Vertically up and down went the oars, a poor half-hearted stroke. Lascars only, of course. Heavy oars and a heavy sea-boat—still, coming ever so slowly our way. The light dwindled. The figure holding it stooped, dropped the old flare, and erected himself, holding a new one. So soon as I could hear the thump of oars, I'd try the pinch.

"Then the oars stopped. Some one in the stern stood up, hand shading eyes, and looked—every way but our way! Oars again started their deliberate and dead-alive movements. The boat veered from us. At this my hand crept along the buoy, found a hand, felt up to the fleshiest part of the forearm, gathered a finger and thumbful of it, and pinched the wet flesh for all I was worth. But all the pinch had gone out of me. The girl never winced.

"Again the boat stopped. I could hear voices. They were scarcely one hundred yards distant. But I had shot my last bolt. I lay silent and helpless. The light went out, oars thumped again.

"But I hadn't shot my last bolt. Fate, that sorry impish jade, who loves a joke but carries it too far sometimes, supplied me with another noise. I remembered that once I could cat-call. Instantly I sucked two fingers dry, and, wondering whether I could recall my boyhood's proudest achievement and my brothers' envy, I inserted them and breathed what breath I still had in me through them. Result amazing! I cleft the thick darkness once. The rowing ceased, another flare was burnt. I could see them looking towards us, but we lay just beyond the circle of light. I spurred myself to one more effort, and it produced an answering hail. On the tail of it crept the boat, and with it the light, till it touched us, lit up our wet white faces (that's how they first saw us, they said later), and then, 'There she is,' and then again, 'Why, there are two of 'em.' Of course. I hadn't thought of it before. No one had seen me go overboard.

"Our troubles were ended. We were bundled aboard. The girl was passed aft to the doctor. I relapsed happily on to the bottom boards, where five minutes' rest and a brandy flask made me as good as new.

"On the way back to the ship we picked up my star. It was the patent buoy after all, and had been floating not a couple of hundred yards from us all the time. I asked the quartermaster when it would be dawning. He said, 'Why, bless you, sir, it ain't gone four bells yet. You haven't been gone not much more than half an hour.'

"The red and green lights

of the *Hibernia* looked vastly pleasant as we neared her. To make sure we found her, she let out a short bellow now and then from her syren. Then as we opened her, there came into view the rows and rows of cheerful lighted scuttles, and the glimmer of her many lighted decks, and heads clustered like bees along her rail. Like bees they buzzed and like human beings they cheered as we passed along to the companion ladder. This had been rigged during our absence. At the lighted entry-port at the top stood a waiting group, the skipper, a lady, some stewardesses. But that deck had been cleared. As we hooked on, the doctor called out from the boat, 'All right, sir! all right, Mrs Seton.' And the clustered heads along the rails above broke out afresh.

"I effected my return on board by great luck and without the smallest trouble or notice. In the hurry of the event, they had not lighted up the companion-way. The entry-port at the top was brightly illuminated, but the stairway up to it was in total darkness, as was the boat. Up we all went in a bunch, closely following the doctor and his blanketed burden. The waiting group at the top had eyes for none but these two, and none of them knew then that Miss Seton was not the only one picked up. At the top, all turned to the left, I to the right. Before me lay the long empty perspective of white enamelled steel walls, with the red curtains from open cabin doors swinging out and back with the ship's motion. I had a clear run to my cabin, and reached it without meeting a soul. In ten minutes I had changed and stowed my wet duds in my soiled linen bag. Then I hurried upstairs to hear all about it.

"I did hear all about it. I had an hour of real undiluted joy before turning in. The decks were still humming with excitement. An event had occurred, not a meal, which is the usual sort of event on board ship, and which, through over-frequency, loses its eventhood, but something that set rumour flying, liars lying, and every one talking. I circulated from group to group, discreetly merging myself with each in turn, a wide-eyed seeker after the authentic, an eager gobbler-up of the last detail. Before turning in an hour later, I confess to have experienced joys that I can only describe as poignant.

"Thus (overheard at the first group): 'I give you my word she *would* sit on the rail, just here where my hand is now. We begged her not to, but she would: sort of bravado. She hooked her toes under the third rail, and said she'd do well enough. Then, by Dam—you see the double awning here, just above where her head was?—well, hang me, if a blinkin' rat didn't fall out from

between the two awnings and slap into her lap. A real old buck bilge rat; and after him the ship's cat. Well—I ask you—who wouldn't? She—I mean Miss Seton—came unstuck, and over she went into the soup—biff!'

"'And you after her, Charlie, my lad!' from a scoffer.

"I passed to the next group, edged in, and merged—

"'And there she was as cool as a cucumber, surrounded by sharks.'

"I got no forrader here, for they kept on harping on sharks and cucumbers, and I felt that more succulent stuff awaited me elsewhere. It did. I inoculated myself unobtrusively into a very promising group, its members' eyes all on stalks, the jaws of some of the more emotional slightly slaverous. A lady was holding forth, a born narrator, recklessly lavish of grace-notes and embroidery. She was giving a recitation rather than telling them all about it. I missed just a few of the opening bars, and came in at—

"'. . . a real British sailor sort of man, such *true* blue eyes, bluff and hearty, with a sort of Berserk beard—*you* know—*honey*-coloured.' (No—I didn't know. Bluff and hearty eyes I could allow—but not eyes with a honey-coloured beard.) She continued, emphasising nearly every third word: 'This is what he told me, and he was obviously speaking the truth: "Lady," he said, "we'd bin nosin' around for the matter of a hower or two in that frail little craf', looking for that pore young lady. Ah! it was dark, and the seas breaking terrible. But we didn't care, yooman life hung at the stake. Presently I sez to my mate, 'Alf,' sez I, 'd'y 'ear anything?' 'No,' sez Alf. 'Listen,' sez I. Well, we stops lab'rin' at the oar and listens. 'There 'tis again,' sez I. 'Where?' sez Alf. 'Out there,' sez I. After a bit Alf sez eager-like, 'I 'ear—a yim!' And so 'twas, lady—Greenland's Hicy Mountains aringin' like church bells acrost them watery wastes. Didn't 'arf make me want to cry. But I masters it and sings out, 'Give way, my hearties! lay down to it!' Ay—didn't we make her travel! Straight toward Greenland's Hicy we heads, quite disregardless of sharks and that. But 'twas thirsty work, what with the dangers we run and the 'eat and the anxiety and all. Presently we sights her, calm as calm a-settin' in her life-buoy singing among the sharks—stacks of 'em, lady, if you'll believe me. If I may say so, lady, that pore girl—young lady, I *should* say—is a 'oly one, settin' there and yim-singing among all them perils. Well, I lifts her up in m'yarms—as light as a feather she was—and she looks up in my face so trustful-like, and she sez, 'Thank you, quartermaster.' Just that. I broke down arter that, ay, I did—

growed man and all—and so did Alf, wors'n me. We sets there crying like babies." '

"The actual recitation ended here—that is to say, *oratio recta* ended and *obliqua* set in, with a spot or two of recta thrown in for effect. 'If I may say so,' continued the lady, 'that simple sailor is a religious man—deeply religious. He was so touched by what he, poor fellow, called the yim. And he *did* look so *parched*, quite husky. He had that *thirsty* look in his eye—*you* know. I called to a passing steward, and ordered him to bring a lemon squash *at once*, with lots of ice in it. But the sailor, poor man, looked quite put out. He said how grateful he was, but added, "Not that, lady—not that. I never takes nothin', only stout in the Red Sea, lady, and ice sits cold to the stomach, pard'-ning your presence, lady." I asked the *dear* fellow whether he was *quite* sure that fermented liquor was good for him during such a heat wave as we were having. He said he was perfectly certain that it was, even in the "hottest latitoods." So I ordered him a *small* bottle of stout. I really didn't dare to let him have a big one. And he went away, that *true* heart, quite silent, without *another* word. Such a *dear* man, what I call a *true* British tar.'

"Oh, but this was rich! This was rare! Well did I know that hearty honey-bearded tar—the ship's butcher, no less—almost as much a fixture, almost as familiar to her passengers as *Hibernia's* buff-and-blue funnels. I warrant he had never pulled an oar in his life, or been afloat probably in any craft less frail than an ocean-going ship. A man of strength, our butcher, a mingler of strong drink, mighty to drink it, and quite unashamed in asking for it. A small bottle of stout to the likes of him! Oh, the glorious irony of it! Oh, the insult! I was now so full of hiccoughy pains owing to suppressed mirth that I had to mount to the deserted boat-deck, and let it gush from me into the night.

"I drifted to yet another group. Here they had got hold of me at last. I had been thinking it was about time. Some one was saying, 'Oh, I believe it's all nonsense. Two people could never have happened to fall overboard at the same time.' 'Yes, but,' said another, 'one of them might have jumped in after the other, mightn't he?' 'I'll give you two reasons why not,' said the first. 'First, he couldn't have gone overboard without *some one* seeing him, could he? And next, still less could have come alongside in an open boat under the eyes of hundreds of us without being noticed.'

"'And yet, he was in that open boat.'

"This from me in the measured grave tones of one who knew. At once I became the focal point. 'No,' I said,

'don't ask me. I know nothing.' This touched that chord of receptivity which in the right atmosphere twangs so readily in the average human breast, and ensures unquestioning belief in the most palpable guff. My audience were all certain now that I knew something, if not everything, and they were ready to gorge it. 'No,' I said, waving them off, yet luring them on. 'Don't ask me. All I say is that we shall never know who the man was, and (I added) reason too!' I had hit on the exact wave length, tuned in, my three-valve set had attained perfect receptivity, and, I felt sure, would reproduce as perfectly. I paused here. Then, 'Mind you, what I say is only my belief, my private personal belief, but I can add two and two as well as another, and this is what it seems to me to come to. The man picked up with Miss Seton was one of the ship's people. He was found safe and snug inside the buoy, she, outside—among the sharks. Naturally, the ship has her good name to keep up. Naturally, it'll be all hushed up. You wait and see. No—I don't know who he was. I told you I knew nothing.'

"No one among my audience thought of asking how I had come by the figures which had made up my simple sum. No one found anything odd in my inference that a life-buoy was a sort of water-tight-shark-proof buoy in which a man might sit immune from danger. But one of the brighter lads asked, 'But how about his coming alongside in that open boat and us all looking down into it and not spotting him?' I crushed this worm that had ventured to turn and query my statements. 'Consider a moment,' I said. 'You looked down into an open boat certainly. But what could you see? Whom could you recognise? Nobody. It was pitch dark down there. Now what about it, eh?' I strode away with the superior air of one who can add up two and two, but finds that others can't.

"I had sown my libellous seed. I felt that during the night it would germinate, that next day it would have 'taken hold,' as gardeners say. I laid me down in my chosen airy spot on deck, and fell asleep to the thud of the propellers which had swished so close past my head such a short while ago.

"I was right. Next day the seed had taken hold, firm hold, of the minds of all. It was an established fact now that the boat had picked up a man with Miss Seton. But it was a mystery as to who that man was. Clearly the ship was making a hush-hush matter of it. No one else would—and why? Because there was something discreditable to hide. And why should the ship want to hide it? Because one of her own people had not come out of it too well. That was the simple logic of it. No getting out of

that. And so all the world wondered. It was a very idle world, glad to have something to wonder at. It walked the deck or lay in its chair and wondered and cogitated.

"At dinner that night the Skipper made an effort to dispel the mystery. He may have succeeded, but my seed had taken a good hold. And it didn't much matter, for with our arrival in the Canal and the departure of prickly heat, we had other things to think about. But that night the Old Man rose from his chair and addressed us as follows :—

"'With reference to last night's happenings, I'm glad to tell you all that Miss Seton is going on as well as can be expected. She hasn't, of course, been worried with questions, but she says that she remembers nothing of what happened. That being so, we are left in the dark as to who the man was who went overboard after her, gave her a life-buoy and, in short, saved her life. I can, however, assure you that the rumour which has come to my ears as to that man being one of the ship's company is untrue. I have made the most careful inquiries, and I can assure everyone that there's nothing in it. No, the man who went overboard is here in this saloon. He hears my words and I see him, though I don't know which of you he is. He did a manly thing. He'd do a manlier, if I may say so, if he'd own up to it. Mrs Seton is very anxious to thank him, and so are we all. Now!' He looked round, did the old noodle, as if he really expected some one to be still manlier and get up and say, 'I'm the man.' There was a dead silence. Then some one jumped up and began 'For he's a jolly good fellow.' Then every one else jumped up and joined in. And there was I roaring louder than any one that I was a jolly good fellow! After that a would-be horsey man, who had probably attended a selling lottery once, sang out, 'Fifty pounds in the lottery. Great Unknown for sale! Any offers, gentlemen? No advance? Well, then, going, going, gone! Great Unknown goes for £50. Owner taking nothing.' That finished it.

"We reached Marseilles. Most of the passengers cleared off here. The Setons were to have gone, but Miss Seton, though up and about, was not fit for the railway journey. I was also to have gone, but changed my mind at the last moment. I usually hate the Bay and the up-Channel voyage, but I seemed to fancy both this time.

"We were quite a reduced crowd on board now, and I saw a good deal of the Setons. One day Miss Seton recurred to that night in the Red Sea. She told me that it was all a closed book to her still, and that she was like a person who had had a dream and couldn't

remember what it was about. But she rather thought it might come back to her, as such dreams did sometimes. I felt pretty safe, however.

"The Bay was topping, like a mill-pond. The decks were no longer crowded; one could pick and choose one's place. One day Miss Seton and I had tucked ourselves up in deck-chairs in a sheltered spot, for it was turning colder now. She wasn't very talkative that day, but suddenly she said—

"'Were you the man who went overboard after me?'

"I asked her whatever made her ask a question like that.

"'I don't quite know,' she said. 'Several things perhaps. Intuition perhaps, or curiosity, or perhaps because you might be the sort of man to do that sort of thing. But, anyway, I think you've given yourself away.'

"'How so?'

"'Why, because if it hadn't been you, you'd have said no, and not answered my question with another. See? Besides, my dream's coming back to me—in spots, you know—just here and there something's filling in the picture of that night. I remember, for instance, the rat quite plainly. And was it you who called me a jade? Some one did, and the voice seems rather familiar.'

"Well, the cat came out of the bag. It had to. It's no good trying to win out in a cross-examination by a woman. I swore her to secrecy, of course, except her aunt, who at that moment came blowing along as she was always doing now. It had become a joke between Miss Seton and me; we called her the *mauvais courant d'air*. So I cleared out. But, my eye! wasn't she snotty with me later on! Not much Madonna-like calm about her when roused, I can tell you. 'Aggravating' and 'making silly mysteries' were some of the things she said. She did sting, especially when she said she hated 'mock heroics.' Miss Seton only made it worse with, 'But, Aunt Amy, he *is* a hero,' and I worse again—I was quite nettled now and forgot myself—by saying, 'I'm damned if I am.' But things blew over in time, and aunt and I got quite nice to one another.

"I was sorry when the voyage ended. I'm not usually. Miss Seton was rather extra cheerful when she said good-bye—more than I was. And the aunt gave me their London address and said, 'Come and look us up one of these days, won't you?'

"I did look them up. They were awfully hospitable folk, and I went pretty often. Of course, I had long been over head and ears with Miss Seton, but I had kept it to myself, and I don't think she had any inkling of it. But one day I went there meaning to propose. What worried me was this. Miss Seton might conceivably think herself, quite wrongly, under some sort of obligation to me for having let me share

her buoy. I felt that on that account she might say yes, while on every other account she would say no. You see my point? Well, I decided to have no nonsense of that sort, and to make it clear to her that I couldn't receive a yes on those terms. So when we were alone, I told her that I knew she was full of common-sense, and wouldn't let me down in the matter I was about to speak of. She looked rather puzzled, and said she hoped not. Then I said that great issues hung upon her answer to a question I was about to ask her. She looked less puzzled now, so I went on—

"'You mustn't let any imaginary sense of obligation to me influence your answer. You see that, of course?'

"She looked rather bored and said no. But she meant yes, really. The matter now seemed to me to have been made perfectly clear, but to make quite sure, I said, 'Word of honour now!'

"And she said, 'Yes, but I don't know what you're driving at.'

"'You will in a minute,' I said.

"Then I proposed.

"She sat silent—I expect it was rather unexpected — for quite two minutes by the clock. She sniffed a little, but quite audibly. I thought she was about to cry.

"Well, I saw that she had forgotten her word of honour, and wanted to say no, only the obligation wouldn't let her. That's how I figured it out. The best thing I could do was to make it easier for her by clearing out. So I said, 'I shall leave you to think things over,' and I went.

"Later on, after casting it up, I felt quite positive that her real feelings towards me were no, but that her unreal or obligation feelings would have forced her to say yes. You can't trust a woman's word in everything: she'd have let me down. I was glad I left her before that happened.

"To make things easier for her, I wrote and refused for her. I worded my letter very carefully, so that she could see that I wouldn't change my mind.

"She never answered it. Sensible of her, I thought."

Had William been the *parfyte gentyle* knight, he should now have departed to some remote part of the earth, where in a temperature of 40° under zero or 120° above it he could have awaited an end to his miseries. He might have passed, perhaps lessened, the interim by attacking the larger carnivora with inadequate small-bore rifles or even the long-bow. But he did none of these things. Having fulfilled so excellently the rôle of blundering cockchafer, he had assumed that of the moth anxious to singe its wings: he remained in London. He was not in the least aware of the hash he had tried to make of things.

Mary Seton had been be-

wildered and baffled by William's method. But she possessed the grace of humour, and a woman will forgive more easily than any other the fault of quixotry in the man she loves. She wept all over her aunt, but the position was not hopeless.

Thus the moth was fluttering in melancholy-wise down Piccadilly some fortnight later when it sighted the approach of Mrs Seton. Desire for a singe overcame the fear of a snub, and it held on its course towards her, and did not escape up Halfmoon Street.

Mrs Seton was a woman of the world, and received William kindly, but immediately took him into custody. She remarked that it was quite a long time since he had been to see them; what had he been doing with himself? Oh yes, thanks, Mary was quite well—at least, quite well in herself, but rather mopish, off her sleep. Quite unaccountable. Too much season, she supposed. "We must do what we can to cheer her up."

"So," thought William, "Mary had not confided in her."

But William knew rather less than nothing of the sex.

It was borne in on him that his part in the cheering-up process was to come back to lunch—nor was he loth to fall in with this implication.

Mary came trilling and tripping down to that meal. There were no signs of mope. Her lover, who had expected a Niobe in half-mourning, if not a French widow under a cascade of crêpe, was again puzzled. During the meal she was bright, chatty, and not the least constrained. After it, when her aunt and William were alone for a moment, the latter said—

"I'm glad your niece is so bright. I had rather gathered from what you said——"

It was then that the violet-ray burnt momentarily in aunt's eye and illuminated William's dull understanding as she hissed—

"Oh! you—you—*Man!*" adding at once in normal tones as Mary re-entered, "I'm simply snowed under with letters to write. I'm going to leave you two to amuse one another."

Some two hours later they were still amusing one another. An endless spoony wrangle was in process. They were seated in a chair capable of holding two in a vertical plane, and William was saying—

"But, my darling, you know you hesitated quite a long time."

"But, my sweetheart, weren't you just a little in a hurry? And your meaning wasn't very clear, was it? I don't think it's usually done like that."

"But, my ownest, you sniffed, you positively sniffed. You must allow that. And naturally I took it for granted that——"

"But, my sweet, mayn't I sniff when I'm too frightfully

happy? Why, if I had been perfectly sure of your real meaning, I might have sobbed or even howled."

"I didn't think sniffiness was usual under the circumstances," said William.

"No; but then you have such a lot to learn about us, darling. And then came your dear horrid letter just as if I had proposed and you were refusing me. Aunt Amy and I cried all over each other about it."

"But I thought you hadn't told your aunt anything about it?"

Mary screwed her neck round —their positions necessitated contortions. She eyed him like a dove, and cooed like one—

"Oh, you—you—dearest and best, but *Man!*"

At that moment Mrs Seton gave evidences of being outside the door. William made efforts to rectify their postures.

"Not on your life," said Mary. "And if you don't mind, I'm now going to really cling. Aunt Amy will simply love it."

"I suppose," said Aunt Amy, after envisaging things, "you've accepted my niece this time?"

"I have," said William, in a strangled voice, "for the second time of asking."

CHASSEURS OF PROVENCE.

BY J. O. P. BLAND.

I REMEMBER noticing, at the time of the *ouverture de la chasse* last September, that no less than fifteen thousand citizens of Paris had taken out gun licences. It is a figure which, like the long line of patient fishermen on the quays of the Seine, speaks volumes for the indomitable optimism of the sporting instinct in Frenchmen, or, shall we say, for their philosophic acceptance of the day of small things? Down here, in Provence, amongst the vine-lands of the Esterels and the Chaine des Maures, the proportion of able-bodied males which fares forth on Sundays with game-bag, dog, and gun is probably a good deal higher than in the Départments du Nord. No doubt the post-office could give you the amazing totals, but it would be much more interesting to know how the average head of game per gun works out in a season, and to learn what constitutes game in the eyes of the average chasseur; in other words, where he draws the line and not the trigger. As I take my walks abroad and hear them popping away merrily on the wooded hillsides all around; as I watch them, sipping *petits verres* at their ease in some wayside inn and telling their stirring tales of flood and field, I sometimes ask myself these questions; but the more one sees of these indefatigable sportsmen, the deeper becomes the mystery of their numbers and perseverance.

Occasionally, when I overtake one, sturdily trudging homewards at dusk, his game-bag hanging suspiciously limp, I fall in with him for a while, and tactfully endeavour to pump him concerning the nature and habitats of his quarry; but the heart of the mystery has never been greatly enlightened by these encounters. Your true son of the soil in these coast-lands of Provence is endowed with a wealth of imagination and of words which leaves Tartarin, so to speak, on the post. He has all of Tartarin's instinct for the dramatic and the picturesque, the *méridional's* passion for impressing the world at large with a sense of his cleverness and importance; but his methods are more elemental, one might almost say (at a safe distance) more childishly simple, than those of the hero of Tarascon. If you know your "Cantagril" you will understand what I mean. The swagger and *panache* of the Provençal lack something of that quality of philosophic geniality which makes the extravagant romancers of the true Midi such pleasant com-

pany. His humour is often more suggestive of the Irishman, trailing coat-tails provocative, than of the Scotsman, prancing and preening to the sound of the pipes. He is intolerant of interruptions, and inclined, should you ask inconvenient questions, to become somewhat dogmatic and overbearing in his manner. But a good fellow withal, and of infinite variety. Small blame to him for the latter, when you consider the number of races that have gone to the making of his forbears—Carthaginians, Phœnicians, Visigoths, and Greeks, Romans, and Franks and Moors. The Moor in particular has left his mark upon this region of the Esterels as plainly as in Andalusia. You may trace it not only in the architecture of the seaside towns, but in the attitude of Cantagril towards his womenfolk, and in something elusively Oriental in the type and bearing of many of the women themselves.

But to return to our friend the *chasseur*. The last one with whom I discussed the matter of his quarry, young Fernard, a motor mechanic by trade, was just starting out from his garage when I met him, with an ancient and very rusty fowlingpiece under his arm. It was then past five o'clock, so that by the time he got beyond the vineyards to the nearest foothills, there would not be much more than an hour's daylight left. What did he expect to get in that time, I inquired. "Oh, something or other for the *pot-au-feu*," he replied airily. "Anything that comes along—a rabbit or a squirrel or two; with luck, a brace of partridges." And with that, as we walked along, he began to tell me volubly of memorable bags that he had made, giving me to understand that he had been a *chasseur* since he was fourteen, and that there wasn't much that escaped him. "But to-day, as you see, monsieur, I am without a dog. He has gone with my brother Jules. Lucky devil, Jules; he can get a whole day off." The dog, he would have me to know, was the fine flower of all canine intelligence, a species by itself, combining all the virtues and talents of pointer, spaniel, and retriever—a very dog of dogs. "Not much to look at, perhaps, monsieur, but what a nose, what miraculous endurance, what super-dog sagacity!" He was still describing the qualities and exploits of this peerless hound when we came to the cross-roads, where our ways parted, and I bade him farewell.

In the course of the next half-hour, on the main road to Beauvallon, I must have met at least half a dozen more brethren of the gun, some on bicycles and some afoot, all accompanied by weary-looking dogs of fearful and wonderful breeds. One sportsman carried a partridge in the outside netting of his game-bag, for all the world to see; another dis-

played a nondescript bundle of feathers, and there were lumps and protuberances in other bags which might, or might not, have been game. One very voluble individual, with whom I passed the time of day, exhibited with no little pride the results of his day's *chasse*—to wit, a magpie, a squirrel, two blackbirds and a jackdaw. Taking one consideration with another, and knowing what I know of these woods and fields, I cannot help thinking that the *pot de vin* by the wayside has as much to do with many of these excursions and sorties as the *pot-au-feu*. True, the call of the wild is in their blood; they fare forth, these inveterate Esaus, in response to its ancestral voice, on the "trail that is ever new"; but the wild, as represented by these woods of silex and bruyère, cork-trees and pine, has been so ruthlessly shot out, by generations of pot-hunters, that one may often wander through them, as I have done, for half a day and catch no glimpse of fur or feather. The dismal scarcity of bird-life throughout all the land reminds one sometimes of the hillsides of Japan. Magpies there are, and owls that hoot by day in the eucalyptus trees, and during the spring and autumn migrations one may see tits, buntings, and other birds of passage. For myself, I find these woods somewhat melancholy for lack of that choir, invisible and inviolate, which fills our English glades with sweet music.

Such edible birds and beasts as contrive to escape their pursuers in the least accessible and thickest covers—partridges, rabbits, and squirrels—have developed the instinct of self-preservation to such a pitch that, at the first sight or sound of dog or man, they make themselves scarce with amazing rapidity and cunning. In the course of a morning's walk, you will come across plenty of freshly-stripped pine-cones, but never the squirrel that stripped them; tracks, here and there, made by night-feeding rabbits, but rarely so much as the whisk of a white scut. As to partridges, it is not to be denied that there are always a few local birds to be bought in the market-places of Hyères and Cannes, and even in the smaller towns, so that some must succeed every season in escaping the perils that encompass them about on every side; but all I can say is, that in the course of many *cèpe*-hunting rambles around and about these hills, it has never been my fortune to see one. Probably, like the bamboo partridge of Central Asia, they only take to their wings as a last desperate resource, when suddenly disturbed or when chased by a fast dog, and make for cover again as soon as possible. I was talking about this to old Larignac one day lately—a very noted hunter is old Larignac, who can generally be relied upon to produce a bird or two when required. I asked him where and how he had managed to get the two brace which he had delivered to my order one day when the

local market was bare. He had found them, he said, quite close at hand, just behind the brow of our own hill, in fact. They were the last of their hatch, and he had killed the four birds with two shots—bang-bang, just like that. Thereupon, solemnly pledging me to secrecy (*un petit truc à moi, vous savez*), he told me how the horrid deed was done. There having been practically no rain throughout this region for several months, the water-courses and pools of the valleys were all dried up, so that the birds were hard put to it to find drinking-places. By drilling a hole in the pipe-line which carries water to a farm from a spring near the hill-top, he had made quite a nice little pool for them in a secluded spot. A few days later he had found the marks of a covey at the edge of this pool, and next morning, from an ambush twenty-five yards away, he had bagged the lot. Very ingenious, you must admit, but such exploits make it all the harder to understand how any species of edible creature contrives to survive in these parts.

Strange as it may appear, however, somewhere in the deep and secret places of the woods, as every *chasseur* will tell you, the wild boar has his being; at night he descends upon the vineyards and the maize-fields, and plays havoc with the crops. There are foxes, too, and wild cats, that take their toll of the poultry yards of the foothill farms. It is probably because many of these woods carry a thick undergrowth of genesta, bruyère, and *siste* (chief cause of the fires that periodically blacken the faces of the hills), that these marauders can still find coigns of refuge and paths of escape almost within sight and sound of our lordly riparian villas. Strange, when you come to think of it, that the wild boar in his lair should have lived to hear the whistle of the railway-engine and the buzzing of steam-saws; on still nights his savage breast may even be soothed by the distant strains of American jazz, projected by some farmer's gramophone in the valley. Another possible explanation of their survival lies in the fact that, from the pot-hunter's point of view, they are not worth the trouble and risks of bagging them. One day, towards the end of the *vendanges*, when several rows of a neighbour's vineyards had been laid waste by a boar, I asked old Larignac why he and his friends never organised a *battue* to rid the farmers of these malefactors, and at the same time to give their Alsatians a taste of real sport. I told him how these things are done in Hungary, and expatiated on the succulent merits of boar's head. The suggestion left him curiously cold. There had always been *sangliers* in the fair land of France, he said; they had ravaged the vineyards of Provence since grapes were first invented, but the only way that Frenchmen had ever hunted them, from time immemorial, was with cavalcades and hounds and the

winding of horns, even as they do it to this day in the forests of Fontainebleau—a costly and unremunerative business. The fact of the matter, I imagine, is that these *chasseurs* of Provence, of their nature individualists and solitary hunters, know themselves and each other too well to indulge in any hope of circumventing a boar or other wild beast by co-operative venery and combined tactics. The result would be every man, and every dog, for himself, amidst great argument, even as it was of olden times, when they went hunting Saracens with Richard of the Lion Heart and Baldwin of Flanders in the Holy Land. So the wild boar and Reynard go their accustomed ways in the heart of the woods, while Larignac and Condorlet and the rest, with their half-bred pointers and spaniels, pursue the rabbit and the skylark and the thrush. There is, it is true, a legend in these parts of a boar trapped in a pitfall by an Italian, who, in the pursuit of his calling as a cutter of bruyère roots for the pipe-makers, had become learned in woodcraft and the ways of beasts. Larignac vouches for it as a fact; but his only comment on the exploit is that the meat was tough and unsavoury.

To see and hear our local *chasseurs* at their best, one should take one's after-dinner coffee under the palm-trees of the little café, whose terrace looks out over the harbour of Ste Maxime across the wine-dark sea to the twinkling lights of St Tropez. There, while they digest their *bouilleabaisse* (another typical instance, by the way, of the Gallic sporting instinct well content with small things) and savour their rosy-tinted wine, you may hear them telling each other (or, for lack of listeners, the stars of heaven) tales of the chase by land and sea enough to make Bahram's mouth water. All around and about them, under tables and chairs, with noses comfortably snuggled on front paws, lie their dogs, companions of their glory, but fortunately dumb. Condorlet, no doubt, has heard Larignac's best stories a hundred times, and *vice versa*, but time cannot wither, nor custom stale, the zest and relish of their telling. Besides, there is always the possibility of a chiel amang them takin' notes, and the chance to *épater* some wandering bourgeois, even as you or I. To me, as I sit there under the palms, smoking a contemplative pipe and watching a dark sail come round the harbour mouth and glide softly to her moorings, their interminable talk and splendid wealth of gesture are very pertinent and pleasant. For, with all their naïveté, they possess and enjoy something of the Homeric quality, a certain breezy largeness, as of hills and the sea; there are times when their little Odysseys recall to mind the imperishable voices of the Odysseus and the faithful swineherd, on some lone headland of the Cyclades.

"À LA DAUMONT."

BY MARINER.

OVER his second glass of the Yacht Club Madeira—which is famous throughout all the East—after Sunday tiffin, George Merton declared wholeheartedly for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and what is now called the "horse-drawn era," generally.

Maybe if he'd had a third or a fourth he would have vaunted the Middle Ages; you never know how the juice of the grape will affect some people.

This accursedly mechanical age in which we lived, he said, stood for nothing but gross materialism, Bolshevism, hop-pole figures (I think he was referring to women, and not the malting industry), cocktails (he'd only had four before lunch), lip-stick (he was at a dance on Saturday night), and lounge lizards (so I suppose *she* danced with some one else). It was his intention, he announced, to revive the good old times, so far as he could, that very afternoon by doing some postilion driving.

George possesses a set of pony size four-in-hand harness and an ancient wagonette, in which he occasionally drives a team of four of his polo ponies.

At least I suppose he drives them. Sometimes one gets the impression that they are out on their own, as one might say, and that George, though holding the reins, is more the gentleman-in-waiting (on *their* pleasure) than the comptroller.

This postilion stunt was an entirely new notion.

As a matter of fact, though you mightn't think it to look at him, George reads quite a lot, and one of the particular periods of history which he professes to admire is that of the Second Empire in France.

Apparently it was then that a carriage-and-four with postilions was known as "*Un équipage à la Daumont.*"

So *à la Daumont* George said that he, his ponies, and his wagonette would take the air.

It seemed likely to be rather a good sort of rag, but as he said that I was to be the only passenger, I thought we'd better have a little old brandy with our coffee. And perhaps a little more afterwards!

Also, as I gathered that four ponies would require two postilions, I asked George whom he proposed to obtain as the other.

He said Jim Pollexfen, and I said that if that was the case we'd better have a third old brandy, or perhaps take the bottle along with us.

I wouldn't go so far as to say that Jim Pollexfen—"J. P." we always call him—couldn't ride. I think he must

be able to do so (though Heaven knows I am no judge in such matters), as he contrives to remain upon a horse's back whilst proceeding at an alarming speed "cross country," or even down a road; but that seems to me to be more a feat of endurance than of skill—and at least no one is concerned in it besides J. P. —unless any one is unfortunate enough to get in his way!

Postilion driving, as I understand it, though I must plead an almost complete ignorance of the subject, is to some extent a matter of co-operation or partnership, not to say mutual agreement. For instance, if the man with the two front horses goes one way, I imagine that there must be some sort of understanding that the feller with the back pair, or whatever they're called, goes the same way. It seems obvious.

But J. P. is distinctly an individualist, especially when a-horse!

However, it's no good anticipating troubles. They come along all right without that.

It being Sunday afternoon, the first thing to do about J. P. was to awaken him from the more or less stertorous slumber into which he would assuredly have fallen after tiffin. So George and I proceeded to the room which he was occupying for the week-end to perform this not too easy task. The room belonged to some sportsman who apparently was a bit of a naturalist, and it was crammed with all sorts of specimens and trophies, in the middle of which stood the bed upon which J. P., clad simply in a not very extensive towel about his waist, or rather that was where it was intended to be (it was the middle of the hot weather), reposed—an unlovely spectacle!

Having no dynamite or other high explosive handy, George hit upon the idea of laying a large stuffed crocodile alongside him in the hope that its scaly hide might produce that touch of the unusual which will generally arouse even the soundest of sleepers. But J. P. only flung an arm across its neck, and murmured something that sounded like "Maudie, darling," so we capsized the bed and chucked him and the mugger on to the floor.

When he had finished saying what he would do to the pair of us when he'd got his trousers on (but I had taken the precaution of secreting them in a cupboard), George explained to him what he wanted him for. J. P. was quite intrigued, and evidently fancied himself considerably in the rôle of wheel-driver, for which George had cast him.

He is a bit touchy about his riding, so George had to be very diplomatic in suggesting that the wheel-driver (the hinder-man, you know) should regulate his conduct more or less by that of the lead-driver, who would be himself. J. P. merely said, "Right-o, old face," and we left it at that.

The two of them then got themselves into a sort of mixture of polo kit and Sunday clothes (Port Malabar has a great respect for the *convenances* of the Sabbath), though George and I vetoed J. P.'s notion of top-hats, which he insisted were the only proper wear for postilions, and we all went out to the stables where the polo ponies and the wagonette were kept. The syces harnessed up the team with, of course, saddles on the near side animals, and polo reins in place of the long driving ones.

George and J. P. had a bit of an argument about the leaders' traces.

Naturally these were attached to the swingle-bars in the usual way for a four-in-hand, instead of going direct from leader to wheeler.

J. P. wanted to substitute ropes for them, but George said that if any one thought that a Second Empire turnout was tied together with string, then such an one only displayed his qualified ignorance. Or words to that effect. He also said that if people had any idea of postilion driving at all (which I am quite sure that neither he nor J. P. had), the traces would always be kept reasonably horizontal, so that there would be no danger of the bars dropping on the leaders' hocks, or the wheelers' knees.

J. P. only said "Perhaps," and George muttered something about perhaps and his foot (I think it was), which I didn't quite catch.

Anyhow, they both mounted at last, and I got aboard the wagonette and sat on the box-seat.

There was a sort of gear-lever alongside it, so I thought I would see what happened if I pushed it forward.

It made a horrible grating noise, which startled the ponies, so that they moved on suddenly. At least J. P.'s two wheelers did, and bumped into George's leaders.

Apparently I'd put the brake hard on, so the vehicle didn't move at all! George cursed J. P., and J. P. cursed him back, and then they both cursed me; but while they were doing that I pushed the lever back again, and J. P. yelled "Look-out! we're off." And so we were! Very nearly in more senses than one where George and J. P. were concerned too!

The stable-yard is rather long and narrow, but fortunately a syce had the sense to fling the gates open, as the ponies, all of which had been raced now and then at gymkhana meetings, seemed to think that they were starting for the helter skelter scurry, though personally I thought that the first syllable of helter was where we should land—and pretty soon at that! The wagonette seemed to do a pretty steep bank, as the flyin' fellers say, when we turned into the road, and you can take it from me that all that the science Johnnies say about centrifugal force

is perfectly true. In fact, if I hadn't managed to catch hold of the lamp-bracket as I was leaving, I should have proved it there and then!

Presumably they strapped people to their seats in the jolly old post-boy days. Either that or the jolly old post-boys were better hands at their job than George and J. P. It seems to me improbable that they could have been worse.

Once fairly on the road we got down to second speed, or a trot, but George and J. P. *would* go on wrangling over our "hurried exit"—I think that's the right word for it—from the yard.

George seemed to think that J. P. was to blame, and asked him if he thought he was out with a (red-coloured) fire-engine. J. P. said no. Not unless he happened to catch sight of George's nose, in which case there might be some excuse for the illusion that there was a conflagration somewhere. Upon which George, who is sensitive about his principal feature, dried up.

We went along pretty well for a bit after that, but every now and again the traces would get too taut suddenly, with the result that George would "bend to his saddle-bow" like the polite highwaymen in the Christmas numbers, whilst at the same moment J. P. would all but fall backwards. They performed these curious antics once just as we were passing a car-load of ladies of the oldest profession in the world from the Red Lamp quarter of the city, who were out for their daily airing.

Evidently they thought that George was bowing to them, and they seemed to be much gratified, poor things, as they don't often receive recognition in a public thoroughfare.

Unfortunately for George, the General's wife drove past a second or two later, and she had evidently seen his "salute to fayre ladyes," for she gave him the frozen face straight out of the ice-box. George is supposed to be engaged to one of her daughters, but I reckon he can substitute "was" for "is" now!

As for J. P., with his backwards bending movement, I told him that it wouldn't be much use his trying to explain that he was recoiling in horror from George, as her Ladyship had probably decided that he was drunk, and would leave it at that.

I said that she might think it better to be an inebriate than a profligate, but that probably she disliked both sorts, and would condemn one as thoroughly as t'other. J. P. got quite ratty about it!

At last we went up a hill where the road was pretty steep and narrow, with a wall on either side made of the usual combination of stones and mud.

There was a big bungalow at the top, where some people we all knew lived.

They were away (fortunately, as it turned out), but the cus-

tomary wooden box with "NOT AT HOME" painted on it hung on the gate-post.

We thought we might as well put our visiting-cards in it, to show that we had not forgotten absent friends, and so George and J. P. handed theirs to me to do so.

The road was so narrow that I could reach the box from my seat without getting down.

I'd just dropped the cards through the slit, when something—J. P.'s spurs probably, he never could keep his legs still—caused the team to start forward.

I nearly overbalanced, and in trying to save myself caught my fingers in the slit.

As I was dragged away the box came along with me, which mightn't have mattered so much had not the gate-post, a square pillar about six feet high, with a stone ball atop, come with it, and fallen a ruin in the roadway!

In fact, the whole blessed thing simply crumbled into dust!

But as we were moving on, and George and J. P. were quite fully occupied with their animals, and didn't seem to have heard the crash—actually there wasn't much of a noise, the pillar subsiding quite gracefully,—I didn't call out to them. For one reason that my own card had, in some marvellous manner, got jerked back into my sleeve, so that only theirs remained in the box!

At the top of the hill we decided to take a sort of hair-pin corner and return home by another road, which from what I remembered of it—it wasn't much used for traffic as a rule—was a good deal steeper than the one by which we had come up.

There seemed to be a lot of bother about getting round the turning, but polo ponies are fairly used to jostling one another.

J. P. got kicked on the ankle in the process, and defiled the Sabbath atmosphere considerably for some time afterwards, but George—who hadn't recovered from the shock of the *rencontre* with his prospective mother-in-law—George, he only said that he wished that J. P. had been kicked somewhere else, and that for twopence, or some equally small consideration, he would correct the mistake.

So we started down the hill a bit jangled-like.

Very soon we seemed to be going pretty fast, and J. P., whose pair of ponies were in a sort of slithering canter, called back to me, "Brake, you silly ass." So I broke. Or rather the lever did when I jammed it forward, which left the shandridan, as one might say, free-wheeling. J. P. shouted, "Go on, George, dash you!" and George shouted over his shoulder, "Keep 'em back, can't you!" But quite evidently J. P. could *not*, so we went on—considerably.

Mr Kipling has described in deathless verse how a horse battery came across the desert

"like a boundin' kangaroo." I fancy that we went more like a flock of frightened goats down a flight of stairs, but certainly "bounding" came into the movement, so far as the wagonette was concerned, anyhow.

As for me I "bounded" clean over the back of the seat into the hind-part of the vehicle, where I lay wishing that I had followed my great aunt Maria's admonition to go to church morning, afternoon, *and* evening every Sunday.

She was a gloomy old soul, and loved to refer constantly to people "going down quick into the pit."

As it happened there *was* a pit, where they were repairing the road at the bottom of the hill, and I could only wonder whether we were going into it quickly enough to satisfy her!

Presently I heard a yell from George to J. P. "Tell him (me presumably) to blow the horn before we reach the corner."

There was a copper tandem horn in the wagonette, or perhaps I should say that there had been one. I had been wondering what the thing was that was coiled round my neck after my fall from the box-seat.

So, as no horn blew, George and J. P. started shouting Hi! Hi! Hi! or something of the sort, as we approached the corner *ventre à terre*, though Heaven knows we were making sufficient noise as it was. A lot of people rushed out of their houses to see what all the uproar was, and only just rushed in again in time!

You can say what you like about the Derby field rounding Tattenham Corner — you generally read that they were "bunched together" or "strung out," or something.

I, *moi qui parle*, was, I think, bunched together—with the remains of the horn—on the floor of the wagonette, and if I wasn't "strung out," I was precious near flung out as we hurtled through space at the turning. But we got round somehow.

Once more on the flat, on the main road, the breathless postilions managed to get the sweating team in hand again, and the remainder of the journey was uneventful.

We took a taxi from the stables to the Club, and I make no bones about admitting that I got to the bar first.

What the *Haute Noblesse* of the Second Empire required by way of a restorative after a drive *à la Daumont* I don't know, and, to be candid, I don't care.

But I know what I wanted —and wanted badly!

LETTERS FROM THE WEST INDIES.

BY "BARTIMEUS."

II. CURACOA.

ONE has a way of deciding quite definitely beforehand what a place with a familiar name, but not hitherto visited, is going to look like. Australia, for instance, I saw as a perfectly flat expanse of land thickly covered by sheep all nibbling the leaves off a stunted shrub, which presumably represented the Bush. When I found that in actual fact it was otherwise, I accepted the mountains and rivers and bell-birds and lovely gum-trees with astonishment and gratitude. But my conception of what Curacoa looked like got no further than rows of orange-trees in little green tubs, William of Orange and the Dutch and the taste of the liqueur being inextricably mingled to produce the vision; and so, seeing it for the first time, I was conscious of a vague feeling of disappointment.

We passed through the narrow entrance of the harbour, and on either side the quaintly gabled houses were crowded almost to the water's brink. They were saffron and rose and lemon and salmon-coloured, and alongside the wharves coasting schooners and merchant shipping were gay with bunting in honour of the arrival that day of a local commercial magnate. There, there! I said to myself; and indeed nothing could have been gayer under the blue sky or more full of colour than the houses and the bunting. The crowds of negroes who thronged the water-side and the guard paraded on the bastion of an ancient fort should have satisfied any normal yearning for the picturesque. But I missed the orange-trees in the little green tubs something silly.

A pontoon bridge opened to let us through, and we came presently into a wide expanse of water like an inland sea, and there anchored. In the centre of this broad lagoon lay the secret of the visible prosperity of the place, of the gay flags, the crowded wharves, of the line of squat oil-tankers we had sighted as we approached, strung out to the horizon in the direction of the Venezuelan coast.

It was an island; and upon this island, belching smoke to the heavens, were the clustered chimneys and warehouses, the rows of tanks and tankers of a Refinery. The odour of crude mineral oil filled our nostrils: it permeated everything with a reminder of its presence, and

lay, to the anguish of the First Lieutenant, in a rich treacly deposit along the water-lines of our newly painted boats.

The place palpitated with energy and enterprise, but it was not beautiful. Neither, for the matter of that, would any vital internal organ be if suddenly exposed to view. And this Refinery is very much the vital organ of Curacoa; moreover, it is presently going to transform in a very startling fashion that arid island which for a century has been content to export orange-peel for the fabrication of liqueurs, and to lie in a forgotten corner of the Caribbean Sea lost in dreams of buccaneers, of raiding French and British Squadrons, of slave-trading and Van Tromp, and the glory that was Spain.

Because of this rapidly growing prosperity the Curacoans are gay—gay to a degree one does not look for in the Dutch. But the pure Dutch type is rare, anyhow at the evening junketing ashore. The real Curacoan is to Holland what the Maltese is to England, and his language, which is called *papiamento*, is a patois of Dutch and English, French and Spanish, bearing the same relation to any of these tongues that Maltese does to, say, Italian. In the varied physiognomies a Semitic strain intrudes upon the Venezuelan, which in turn has in it hints of other blood than pure Castilian. Their music, to which the young men whirl their partners in a dervish-like gyration that makes the beholder dizzy, beats out a quick passionate throb—quickening and quickening urgently, as though trying to convey some insistent message such as a traveller hears rising uncomprehended from an equatorial jungle. They call it the Curacoa Waltz.

"Here," said one of the gay young men of the town one evening at the height of a revel—"here you see we are different—different to Holland, different to all the world. In us there is the hot Latin blood. *Ja!* We have temperament. Ideas. We do all things different. Listen. I will tell you. I myself"—he tapped his breast—"only yesterday, I was given a water-melon. In the way of business. A water-melon. *Ja!*" He stepped back a pace dramatically, inviting the listener to consider the situation in every aspect.

"What did I do?" He lowered his voice like a conspirator. "I had a friend with ice in his ice-chest. I put the water-melon in his ice-chest. Leave it there two—three hours." Again the dramatic pause. The climax was approaching.

"Then I fetch my friends: four friends—five friends. We sit round that water-melon and eat it up, me and my friends. You see? Different . . . *Ja!*"

He was right. They are different. But wherein the

precise difference lies, which I suppose is the moral of the water-melon story, eludes one.

It was difficult in that queer polyglot community to find out much of the internal history of the island. No doubt archives exist, but the records are probably written in sixteenth century Spanish and seventeenth century Dutch. It was said that there was a priest living in a monastery somewhere in the north of the island who had made a study of its romantic chequered history. But I did not meet him, and all the inquiring mind had to feed on was scraps of legends picked up here and there, supplemented by imagination.

The place must have appealed very strongly to the buccaneers as a refuge for careening their ships unseen from the outer sea. During an earlier period of Dutch occupation I was told an English privateersman, refitting at leisure in the harbour, was called upon by the Dutch to assist in repelling a raid by a French squadron. England being then at war with France, he realised that if the French took the place he would find himself in somewhat of a predicament, and accordingly landed guns and men and assisted in the defence. The French were beaten off, and the English rover having thus had an opportunity of sizing up the strength of the Dutch garrison, decided, to employ a modern metaphor, that it was a case of money for jam. He accordingly fell upon the Dutch, and captured the island.

My acquaintance with Dutch being nil, I could not verify this story; but it has a familiar ring about it; and if it did not happen at Curacoa, I have no doubt that it did elsewhere, although for obvious reasons it is probably omitted from school primers. These questionable tactics belong to a bygone, one likes to think forgotten, age.

There is a small English community resident in Curacoa whose men-folk are employees of the Refinery. When oil was first discovered in Venezuela, access to the wells was only possible to small-draught vessels owing to the shallowness of the lagoons across which it had to be brought to the sea. The company accordingly purchased from the British Admiralty all the available shallow draught monitors on the sale list, and converted them into tankers. A British merchant captain, late of the Royal Naval Reserve, brought this squadron out, and remained as Marine Superintendent. Another Englishman with experience of the sea, who had commanded a mine-sweeper during the Great War, became his assistant, and together they sounded and surveyed and laid moorings, working after the fashion of their kind without fuss or very much in the way of outside assistance—the type

of men Kipling possibly had in mind when he wrote—

"They do not teach that their God will rouse them a little before the nuts work loose;
They do not preach that His pity allows them to leave their work when they dam-well choose."

A pipe-line is now running from the Refinery to the east of the island where, in a bay buoyed and sounded by these sons of Martha, deep-draught ocean steamers will presently connect up direct to the glaring new oil-tanks and fuel in their stride.

It is not wise to prophesy, but I should like to see that little wooded bay, with its ancient Spanish fort on the headland and the lizards scuttling about in the sunny silence of its rocks, in ten years' time. I said so to the man who had first, with a seaman's eye, noted its possibilities, whose mooring lighter lay swaying on the gentle swell in the indigo shadow of the cliffs. "Yes," he said, and stared out across the Caribbean Sea, which lay like burnished silver in the glare of the declining sun. "Yes, this'll be different. I had nothing but a sextant when I started . . ." He turned to his assistant. "Fred, we'll have to lift that buoy out there to-morrow and bleed it."

The other grunted affirmatively. "Brand-new buoy just out from Holland," he grumbled. The man whose only scientific equipment had been a sextant added, "But I shan't be here in ten years' time to see it. A Dutchman is taking my job on next year."

The setting sun threw the shadows of their sturdy self-reliant figures sprawling over the coral trash of the beach, and the whimsy flitted through my mind that perhaps the Dutch Directors of the Refinery had been studying the records in the archives of Curacoa, and were taking no chances.

There was a fourth person present during that conversation, taking no part in it, the eleven-year-old daughter of the Marine Superintendent. We had driven for ten miles in a stout-hearted Ford car, over roads so appalling that every now and again I looked back to see if she had been jolted clean through the hood. It would have astonished me less than it did to see her still sitting sedately in the back seat holding a little attaché-case on her lap with a bathing costume in it.

The arid country was covered with short scrub, and very sparsely populated. A few negro habitations were scattered along the highway, each with its clump of struggling maize. In the distance the grey hills rose in abrupt formations, miniature resemblances to Gibraltar, scattered over the landscape. To the north the country was thickly wooded, and here a few deer still roam, and iguanas and

peacock. We came at length to a narrow defile originally hewn out of the volcanic rock by slaves, and the road swung round into a little bay. On one headland stood the Spanish fort, the old brickwork (every brick had been brought from Spain) warm and mellow in the late afternoon sunlight. Beneath it and on the opposite headland were the grey buildings of a hospital and yellow fever isolation quarters, built half a century ago, and now derelict. The blue water of the bay lapped upon a curved beach of white coral, and an old steamer moored offshore as a temporary oiling-berth stood out very black against the western light.

From a little jetty which advanced into six feet of utterly transparent water the child and I presently bathed. She dived and swam like a young otter, and after a while, taking me by the hand, she guided me through the sea-eggs in the shallows to a patch of virgin white sand. This she explained was good for drawing faces on, and sank down in one swift movement into an unconscious pose of perfect grace, to be instantly absorbed in artistic creation. I contented myself with profiles, but she was for the feminine full face, executing the nostrils with two particularly cunning stabs of a pointed shell, and adding a wealth of curly hair as a final flourish.

"There!" She sat back, tossing the mop of short hair out of her eyes.

"I like the nostrils awfully," I said.

She nodded complacently. "Yes, they're good." Nostrils were evidently her forte; but I suspect it was the method rather than the effect which was so peculiarly her own. She studied my somewhat feeble attempt at a corsair's profile in generous silence.

"I could do his ear the same way," she volunteered.

"Go on," said I.

She stooped and stabbed.

Then she flung away the shell, dusted the sand from her hands, and ran away to dress.

Ten minutes later I took leave of the Marine Superintendent and his daughter. He stood with one foot on the step of the car and scanned the bay, shell-pink in the setting sun, as though, like me, he was seeing it for the first and last time.

"Good-bye," he said. "I'm glad I've been able to show it to you like this. My work . . . next year . . ." He glanced at his daughter, and climbed into the driving seat, a British seaman not given to eloquence but apparently handy with a sextant. The child took her seat beside him, and sat nursing the despatch-case on her knees, crinkling her hazel eyes against the rays of the burning sunset that, slanting under the hood, had found her where she sat. "I can't

see you!" she cried. "All dazzly . . . good-bye, good-bye . . ." The Ford car bucked into life, rattled across the bit of foreshore where the road ended, and vanished through the cleft in the rocks.

The Assistant Superintendent led the way past cacti and thorn-trees up the steep headland to the fort. The site had been chosen with an eye to defence from land attack as well as from the sea. From the summit it commanded the entire bay, and on the land side a fissure in the sharp rock, fifty feet deep, acted as a natural moat. Here, jammed in a crevice, we counted six cannons, flung down by the Spanish defenders when the capture of the fort by the Dutch became imminent. There they had lain undisturbed for three hundred years.

The last rays of the setting sun were touching the ancient brickwork of the fort with kindly fingers as we left the bay to return to the town. It stood staring to seaward through its embrasures as if sunk in memories—memories of savage Carib onslaughts, of blockades and sieges, of beacon flames tossed high above its battlements into the blackness of tropic nights, of men in breastplates and jerkins, of yellow fever and crucifixes pressed into dying hands. . . . A monument to powers that put their trust in fixed defences and lacked command of the seas.

"Come on," said my companion. "Time we pushed on if we're going to dine in town."

We found time to stop on the return journey, however, and visit the old slave market, now partly overgrown by bush and scrub, standing back a hundred yards from the road.

The short dusk hovered over the place as we walked across the raised "ring" that had once echoed with the shouts of the auctioneer and the bidding of the crowd. It was connected with the slave paddock by a high narrow gateway in design resembling a keyhole, curiously reminiscent of Moorish architecture. In that rainless climate stonework is slow to perish, and very little had changed in the eighty odd years of its disuse. Elsewhere on the island are to be seen the breeding-pens of these "black cattle." It has not yet occurred to any member of the human race to efface these testimonies to its past shame, even to the extent of pulling them down. The curious archway through which so many shrinking heathen had passed to test the quality of Christian charity stood out black against the darkling sky. The hot wind from the parched hills rattled the dry pods of a tree near-by like the chattering teeth of a child. A deformed negro lizard-hunter, his bag of writhing captives in one hand and long cleft stick in the other, came silently out of the bush, stared

at us wonderingly for a moment and vanished as mysteriously as he had come.

It was dark when we entered the town, and, dismissing the car, walked through the narrow cobbled streets to the water-front. The lights from the saloons streamed out across the wharf, painting the glowing trays of fruit and picking out in threads of gold the rigging of the coasting craft alongside. A few of our liberty-men in sun-helmets and white ducks sauntered decorously along in search of cold beer, looking in the garish light and exotic surroundings as unreal as figures in a play.

"There you are," said my companion, as two Petty Officers passed us in sedate converse with a dusky acquaintance. "There are the real ambassadors of Britain. They are probably telling him that Sheffield United wouldn't have a hope against the local football team. It's a funny thing, but nothing raises the prestige of Britain in these foreign ports like the way your men behave ashore. I say your men: thank God, they were mine once."

We crossed the harbour by the pontoon bridge, and entered the chief hotel of the place. A young Venezuelan bar-tender placed before us iced vermouth, a comb, and a bottle of bay-rum, the bar apparently combining the offices of a cloak-room and place of refreshment. Presently we dined, and a Venezuelan family who had finished their meal clustered round a climate-ravaged piano; while one played the air of "I want to be happy," the remainder, mostly small girls, sang in shrill chorus. The entertainment was rendered the more bizarre by the unsmiling melancholy that gazed at the beholder from the dark eyes of the singers. It was, however, lost on my companion, who sat staring over the tooth-picks and cruets at the lights of the harbour, framed by the imitation lace curtains of the window.

Actually he was engrossed by the picture of a moored minefield as seen through the clear blue water of the Dardanelles under the lee bow of a disabled mine-sweeper a second before impact. The sight of the bluejackets had stirred him to reminiscences of the past.

"I think the foremast must have hit me when I was trying to get to my feet," he said presently in a tone of musing detachment. "Only I couldn't get up, because both my legs were broken and my left arm. It smashed all my ribs and my breast-bone, and fractured my skull. I was three hours in the water before they picked me up. Must have been the foremast." He took a long breath, and drank from a tumbler of iced soda-water.

The reflected lights from the pontoon bridge were looped across the dark water beneath

us like a festoon of jewels, obliterating the reflections of the stars. By the waters of that harbour English seamen have doubtless sat from time to time through the centuries, recalling fights and wounds in far-off seas, concerned after their fashion not with the wounds so much, nor with valour and its reward, but with insignificant and irrelevant details.

He looked up from the water and turned his blue eyes on me with the faintly aggrieved manner of one who nurses in his heart a relentless perplexity.

"Yes," I concurred. "Sure to have been the foremast."

He sighed and drank again. "I've often wondered," he murmured.

We sailed next morning at daybreak; and looking back astern at the blue-grey coastline sinking into the distance, I thought of that other English sea-rover of long ago and of the little maid who was going back to England next year, whom my fantastic imagination had linked together by a mysterious chain of cause and effect across the gulf of centuries. I am glad that she will grow into womanhood under English skies, where the wind in the trees has no echoes of forgotten terror; where the music beats to an altogether different time; where dreams come true; and if you know the right place to look for them, you can find orange-trees growing in little green tubs.

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

"LOYALTY, CONTINUITY, TRADITION"—TORYISM AND BIOLOGY—BISMARCK—THE LAST OF THE WHIGS.

THE Tory Party is still in trouble about its health, and well it may be. It is asked to breathe an air in which it feels always ill at ease. It is not permitted to follow the regimen to which many centuries have accustomed it. The prescriptions of loyalty, tradition, and continuity, which it has ever kept ready to be made up, are no longer at its service. In the new world in which it is asked to live some of the ingredients are lacking. With a feverish and natural persistence it would cling to the old remedies, if only those upon whom its existence depends would approve them or supply them. Meanwhile many physicians sit at its bedside, and attempt to keep up its spirits by repeating the ancient incantations. But they repeat them with half a heart, and even the friends of the patient cannot hide from themselves the sorry truth that its life is in danger. This is the failure of the recent treatises on Toryism; they do not suggest the diagnosis of a disease with any immediate hope of a complete cure.

Mr Walter Elliot's 'Toryism and the Twentieth Century' (London: Philip Allan & Co.) has the advantage of a heartening preface from Mr Baldwin; but though it tells us what Toryism should be and has been, it leaves us still in perplexity as to what, in this year of grace, it is. Nothing could be better than the thesis of his book as he states it. "It is," says the author, "that in England the beliefs of the Right are descended from the beliefs of a great mass of the people held for hundreds of years, based on the observation of life, and not on *a priori* reasoning. These beliefs are faith in a humility of the intellect, and therefore a trust in continuity; a conviction that whatever has worked once may work again; and finally a certain optimism, believing that external affairs are on balance friendly to mankind, that they are good, albeit good and irrational; in fact, that they may slay us, yet we will trust in them." Thus the Right opposes its instinct, the matter of all wise thought and artistic expression, to the *a priori* reasoning of the Left, which is opposed to the experience of the ages and to the plain facts of life. The Right will not tolerate the foolish philosopher who, pitting his shallow sophistries against the wisdom of all those who have gone before him, would create daily a new heaven and a new earth out of his sanguine head, and is

surprised when nothing happens in the new world of his creation save bloodshed and disaster. When the Right declared, truly, that the inherited memory of countless generations was a better guide to conduct and to government than a brand-new piece of ingenuity that came ready-made out of a pedant's brain, the men of the Left, in Mr Elliot's words, opposed to the instinctive belief of the Right "an arrogance of intellect, a disbelief in tradition, a conviction that what has once worked is probably outworn, and finally a certain pessimism, believing that if the universe were good it was rational and good, which is to say rational by the standards of the Left, which is to say that if it slew us, either we were wicked or it was unjust." Such is the reason of the Left, the bitter foe of justice, happiness, and beauty, the enemy of the arts, the mean pedlar of small wares and machine-made ugliness. It is the same spirit which, in the name of "a reasonable faith," a contradiction lately invented by a bishop, would persuade the shallow ones to supersede the legend of Eden by a Darwinian hypothesis, not with a humble desire to understand, but in common scorn of imaginative symbolism. Thus when we oppose Right to Left, or as better befits us, being Englishmen, Tories to the rest, we know what is the part which the Tories should play, even in the poor world of reason which is ours; we know also that on the stage, as it is set to-day, the Tories have but a small chance of interpreting the dream of politics aright, or of getting a round of applause at the curtain's fall. Who, indeed, will sit at the trilogy nowadays of Loyalty, Continuity, and Tradition?

The Tories in the past have modified their creeds and their policy, but never in haste, and always obediently to a faith in what they deemed continuity. When they fought the American rebels, and lost a vast colony, they fought the American rebels because they believed, indeed they knew, that mere justice demanded that the North American colonies should take their share in paying for the North American War. In the contest with Napoleon, which grew out of the American rebellion, the Tories proved that they were ready to follow a great man anywhere, a trait which Mr Elliot notices, and which is in harmony with their instinctive character. Thus in the past we may watch them trusting to their crops, and supporting always with what zeal they might the interests of agriculture. As long as they could they fought Cobden and Bright, who did not care how soon they destroyed the prosperity of the landlords and farmers, so long as they could look upon the lives and comfort of the women and children, who continued to work in the factories, as the material of Eng-

lish industry. To-day Toryism is faced with other problems. How shall it survive in a world of sordid ideals and dying traditions? How shall it preserve its constant loyalty or the continuity of a pleasant life?

And by a strange perversity the Tories have since the war redoubled the difficulty of their task. In England politics are a game like tennis or cricket. Only the side that is "in" may count its score. And though the Tories are at present in office, by their own act they have increased the unlikelihood of their coming into office again. By a wide extension of the franchise, thrust upon the country in 1917-18, and by the granting of the vote to flappers, which will probably be made next year on no better plea than that somebody once gave a pledge, the Tories have immeasurably weakened their hold upon the constituencies. Even if they do not suffer for their own act immediately, they will suffer in the end, since it is clear that it takes some time to impress upon an electorate the secret of its new power. In a few years, more or less, the working classes will discover the plain truth that all power is concentrated in their hands; and when once this discovery is made, Toryism, with its loyalties and its traditions, will be cast into outer darkness. A national disaster may bring it back, perhaps, to the service of the country, but we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that, after an interval of time, the other parties will become the normal rulers of England. We are a democracy, and we count heads, not weigh them, and the greater number of empty heads cannot but win a victory at the polls over the heads which alone understand the value of tradition. Obviously, if Toryism is to survive, it must accommodate itself to new and adverse conditions. It is useless for it to kick against the pricks which it has set up against itself without reason; it has laid down the conditions of the combat, and it can do nothing else than accept them.

For ourselves, we are not sanguine enough to believe that there is much more work to be done in England for Toryism. When continuity has been roughly broken, and by the Tories themselves, what chance is there for the Party of continuity to survive? Moreover, as Mr Elliot admits, "the unifying tendency of modern life is nowhere more evident than in the increasing similarity of Party politics in States all over the world," and except in States where the rule of the people has been replaced by an autocrat, we do not observe any symptoms of Tory supremacy. More than this; in every State where democracy has its way, the opposing Parties approximate more and more closely one to the other. Where the statesman does not dictate his views, where leadership becomes every day rarer and rarer,

it is the voters who dictate the policy, and since no Party can hope to succeed without the support of the people, both Parties will come forth as eager champions of opportunity, and will make the same bids, or will strive with all their might to outbid each other. The result is that the difference between the "ins" and "outs" will decrease steadily, and when Governments are changed, it will be men who change, not measures. Again, does the prospect give any hope to the Party of continuity?

Mr Elliot himself is conscious that an essential change is overtaking us. He has broken with continuity altogether. He sees new forces coming into the world, and he responds readily enough to new governments and new estates of the realm. "The chief single factor," he says, "marking off our generation from its predecessors is our command of Power." Coal and iron and machines are the new masters of the earth. "The great problem of the twentieth century," writes Mr Elliot, "is the fitting of the machines into the social scheme." But that is not the work of politics. The workers and the owners of the machines will take their wages and rewards; they will find their places in the world, according to their skill and energy, according to the needs of those whom it is their business to serve. But Mr Elliot, in plain scorn of continuity, seems to think that the controllers of transport and the wielders of "power" have a force and influence which must presently be recognised. He talks of new "estates of the realm." The Peers, he says, are no longer an Estate of the Realm. He scoffs at the constitutional lawyers, who "gravely lecture us upon the great evil of this fact, and the urgent necessity of having it altered, which they propose to do with blue paper and red tape." The champion of tradition should know that it is not by talk such as this that either the forms or the essence of Toryism will be preserved. However, Mr Elliot does not hold very closely to continuity. The "Lords" whom he sees before his eyes, and whom he would apparently gather together into a new revising body for internal affairs, are first of all the "engineers," as he calls them. Their importance in the life of the nation, he says, is quite out of proportion to their electoral strength. In this they differ not at all from any other group of wise and "important" men. It is in the very nature of democracy that the great man should never derive any electoral strength from his greatness. Do we not hear it said boastfully every day that before the ballot-box we are all equal? The day of fancy franchises never came. It will never come now. The only influence now exercised on the State is the influence of numbers. We have so artfully bestowed the

privileges of the vote that all are now disfranchised except the working men and their wives and children. Why, then, should the engineers complain of their electoral weakness when men of learning—poets and philosophers—are far weaker than they? The engineers, like other men of wealth, must be content with what their craft brings them, and they need not repine if they are not invited to meddle in politics, for which they are not trained, and which will not help them to increase their fortunes or their usefulness.

The second group of "Lords," whom he would make members of an Estate of the Realm, are "the bankers, the financiers, the Stock Exchange men—all that is summed up in the words, 'the City.'" These gentlemen have never had the doors of the existing House of Lords, now despised of the young Tories, closed against them. They have found their way thither without any guidance, and taken their place, as of natural right, among the hereditary peers. By Mr Elliot's own admission, the existing House of Peers already includes those whose wisdom is of service to a revising chamber; and if continuity be worth anything, it should be the sincere endeavour of the Tories to make such changes in the House of Peers as should fit it more closely for the work which it has been and will be asked to perform. Even the third set of "Lords," whom Mr Elliot would presumably include in his Estate of the Realm — the bureaucrats or civil servants—are not unrepresented in the existing Upper House. The distinguished public servant not uncommonly ends his career in the House of Lords. No doubt he has earned his elevation, but it can hardly be said that he often proves of vast service to his country in his exalted sphere. His life and training have not fitted him for leadership. Mr Elliot says that "the civil service does the work of Parliament as a clever wife serves a dull husband." And if this comparison be accurate, it shows why even the most highly accomplished civil servant seldom cuts a good figure as a Minister. However clever the wife may be, she is compelled in the last resort to yield the responsibility to the dulness of her spouse, and we cannot think that Mr Elliot would find, even in a "reasonable" Government, much support for his hastily sketched groups of new Lords. After all, we do not want a motley band of successful clerks or men of business to govern us. What we should seek in our statesmen is statesmanship. That is what we found in our hereditary House of Lords, men trained from their youth up in the conduct of affairs. And it will not benefit us if we desert the principle of heredity, the sound principle by which we select our horses and our dogs, and look for irrelevant qualifications in the triumphs of

commerce. Nor can we agree with Mr Elliot when he tells us that the problems of the producer, as distinct from those of the financier or the distributor, are traditionally the province of the Tories, and should be so to-day. He urges us to follow them to their conclusions, and hear from them what their difficulties are. That may have been true when by producers we meant the corn-growers, the tillers of the soil. No longer we mean that by producers. And it is the real duty of the Tories to guard with an equal hand the interests of all classes, to represent not a clique but the whole nation, and to see that in its name no violence shall be done to the triple principle of loyalty, tradition, and continuity.

But when Mr Elliot tells us that "biology is the logos of Toryism," we are in complete disagreement from him. It is true that Aristotle was a biologist. He was not a biologist when he wrote his 'Politics.' He knew better than to obscure two conflicting problems. He did not confuse the problem of government with the fishes of the Mediterranean. He examined the constitution of some hundred existing states, and built his conclusions upon a formidable mass of gathered facts. Nor can any good come of confusing natural science with politics. It will inflict a vast deal of damage upon either side. It will increase the tyranny of natural science, which, by the way, has no right to claim for itself the plain term "science," and natural science is still too arrogant in its bankruptcy. It will make the politicians believe that there is some sort of fatalism in the things that they do and in the words that they speak. That nature, like Toryism, depends upon tradition and continuity is true enough. And the similarity may be pointed out by those who have a fancy for similes and analogies. But there is nothing more than that in the comparison, and politicians must solve their own problems in their own way and for their own reasons. We have all laughed at the foolish Mr Bancroft, the North American historian, who proclaimed aloud that democracy was a natural force, immutable like the waves and the winds, for we know that he talked nonsense, and we know that nobody will ever talk that sort of nonsense again. But his nonsense was no worse than the nonsense of those who find support for Toryism in the thought, the method, and the conclusions of biology. The liver-fluke, the parasite of sheep, cannot help us to govern a country. Between the inevitableness of nature and the ingenious solution of political problems there is a wide gulf fixed. Natural science deals with life and its processes in the making. Politics deal with the full-fledged, self-conscious, sophisticated, two-legged animal called man. It matters not a jot where or

how that animal came to his present stature. He may have come from the apes; he may count the jelly-fish among his ancestors. How do these things affect the politicians, who consider man as a house-dweller and a voter, and as nothing else? A constructive policy does not grow by the hazards of nature, like the liver-fluke: it is made, designed, and fashioned as a table is designed or fashioned, or a pair of trousers. If we want a constructive policy, we don't have recourse to biology. We go to history, to the conscious records of men, who have been confronted with the same problem, and have learned how to solve it. There is far more to be learned about the management of men and their conduct in a civilised society in the 'Iliad' of Homer (let us say) than in all the researches which the biologists have made or are ever likely to make. The old-fashioned politicians, who thought it no shame to quote the classics in the House of Commons, were far better equipped for the task of government than are those who have a smattering of natural science. For it is the misfortune of natural science that it is not a means of education: it does not quicken the intelligence of man; it provides its victim with facts, and withholds from him the chance of culture, if we may use a term bespattered by many evil associations. Indeed, if Toryism is to survive and be worth the respect that it has won, it must turn its eyes resolutely away from biology, and find its impulse and its guidance in the history of the past. For there assuredly will it find the only loyalty, the only tradition, the only continuity, which will keep it alive in an age when even its supporters are questioning its worth.

When we consider the great rulers of the world, we shall find in them no hankering after the dilettanteism of natural science. Bismarck, for instance, who has now become a part of history, and may be considered impartially, was among statesmen the supreme craftsman. Biology had no lure for him. He had the vision to see what lay ahead of him to do, and he had the skill and the strength to achieve his purpose. "Bismarck was no bookworm," says Harden, who knew him well. "According to modern ideas he had not read a great deal, but that little he had read well, and what he had once assimilated was never overburdened with philistine culture. Probably the greater part of what natural sciences and economics had achieved in the later decades was foreign to this ageing man, and he always liked to speak of the conquests of science with the disdain of the son of the soil, who thinks nought of grey theory, and turns up his nose at the value of belauded systems." But if he resolutely passed over those things which did not appeal to his craft, he

neglected no kind of knowledge which might help him to solve the problems of politics. All that was necessary for the achievement of his purpose he had mastered. He was easily familiar with the rulers and the peoples of his time. He knew the past history of Europe and its geography as he knew his hand. He had travelled in all the countries with which it was his lot to deal, and had observed with a quick eye their characters and their ambitions. When it fell to him to steer the ship of German policy through the troubled waters of European politics, he steered in seas which he himself had charted. And what separates him farthest from the amateurs of the natural sciences, now popular, is the mind of an artist which was in him. He was creative always. He looked not for small analogies and petty ingenuities. He envisaged early in his career the masterpiece—a united Germany—which he intended to achieve; and when he was driven from his high estate by the impetuosity of an amateur, who should have been proud to accept his service, he knew that his work was done.

Like all artists, he was self-centred and indifferent to his fellows. He thought only of what he hoped and meant to do, and took but little interest in the work and the strivings of others. He preferred to play a lonely hand, and was more easily inclined to hate than to love. It is for this reason that the general view of him is unsympathetic. He aroused animosities, and never thought it worth while to assuage them. Harden, in a clairvoyant passage, helps to explain him. "From childhood upwards," he writes, "he belonged skin and bone to Horace's *genus irritabile vatum*: he had the passionate subjectivity, the delicate nerves, the elemental humour of the Muses, and the hot temperament of the born artist." The smaller diplomatists did not understand him, and thought that he was attempting to mystify them when he told the truth. Every step he took was in the direction of perfecting his plan. He had sketched from the first the work which he was determined to make. He had an easy control of the processes of his art, and, as we have said, he had a complete mastery of his art's material, which was the conflicting courts and peoples of Europe. So he stood out a great artist among many mechanics, and it is not strange that at last he looked with satisfaction upon his finished design.

Like all great men, he was lonely. He could rely upon the help and support of few of his contemporaries. The monarchs whom he served and whom he raised to grandeur misunderstood him or were jealous of him. As they lacked his courage and his foresight, so they feared the presence of an heroic statesman too near

the throne. But to us, who may look upon his completed career, there should not be much difficulty in understanding it. Herr Ludwig, who has recently written a full life of Bismarck,[1] sets out to depict "an enigmatic character." We confess that we can see the enigma of Bismarck as little as we can see the supposed "mystery" of Disraeli. Each of these statesmen cherished the ambition of serving his country and advancing its power and interests. Each of them pursued his noble aim by his own means and methods. Bismarck's was the more difficult path to follow. He had to deal with a people which was generally hostile, and with monarchs who felt more disapproval than gratitude. Disraeli, at the last, conquered both the English people and his Queen. If the careers of both were the careers of a fighter, Bismarck had to encounter the bitterest animosities, the hardest opposition. As Herr Ludwig says, his life was a "perpetual struggle, occasional victory, unceasing passion, never satisfaction, for the most part sagacity, at times error, but invariably characterised by genius even when mistaken." Herr Ludwig, using this method, overcharges the character. Did Bismarck never have satisfaction? Not even in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles? Truly he enjoyed more triumphs than most. But where is his enigmatic nature? To us his purpose seems clear, as its accomplishment is undisputed. The unity of Germany —that was his creation, and he made the union without the aid or sympathy even of those to whom it should have been of the greatest importance. Nor did he make it without a bitter fight. He was perforce harsh, cruel, ruthless in his methods, and he was all the harsher because he had a profound contempt for the politicians, the men of fluent speech, with whom he had to deal. When he first became a Minister his troubles began, and he knew it. In a letter written in 1862 to his lifelong friend, Motley, and quoted by Herr Ludwig, he lays bare his displeasure. He had, said he, "to listen to amazingly foolish speeches delivered by amazingly childish and excited politicians." He was acutely conscious of his altered state. "When I was an envoy," he says, "although an official, I had the feeling that I was a gentleman; but as Minister one is a slave." He recognised the difficulty of his task. "These chatterers," he went on, "cannot really rule Prussia. I must resist them. They have too little wit and too much conceit. They are stupid and arrogant." He saw them for what they were—typical products of German university

[1] 'Bismarck: The Story of a Fighter,' by Emil Ludwig. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. London: Allen & Unwin.

education. "As far as foreign politics are concerned," thus he summed them up, "they are, taken individually, children; in other matters they become children as soon as they meet together *in corpore*." Dealing with such men as these, he could do nothing else than hold himself aloof. Henceforth he was doomed to loneliness. He might not betray his purposes to his colleagues. There was not one of them to whom he could go for counsel or support.

When the Emperor Frederick died, and William became master, Bismarck knew that his sad hour had come. The new Kaiser, unfit for rule, was determined to rule alone. If he had not ruled, perhaps his capacity might have been taken for granted. So great a hurry was he in, that he cast aside the good counsel of the greatest statesman in Europe. Bismarck knew, and did his best to make his young master understand, that Germany must make a friend either of France or Russia. She could not come victorious out of a war fought on two faces. The Great War proved the wisdom of his warning. While he looked forward with misgiving to the next war, the Kaiser was so little serious that he shifted his alliances in a spirit of absurd levity. Now "Nicky" was his friend; now he fondly dreamed that he had England in his pocket. Bismarck, knowing the past, looked upon the future with other eyes. He thought that if war came, Germany would fight alone. "We should not have the help of Russia, Austria, and England, as we had in 1812, for these Powers would have seen how strong united Germany is." And then with the foresight which seldom deserted him, he saw that the collapse of Russia was possible, if not imminent. "A Russian revolution and the establishment of a Russian republic may come very soon. A great many people in Russia concentrate their hopes upon disaster in war, thinking that when this happens they will be able to get rid of the dynasty." The outlook for Germany was not bright. There was uncertainty on every side. What hope was there of Great Britain in the coming hour of crisis? "Hitherto," confessed Bismarck, "we have had need of England, if peace were to be made possible." And the Kaiser, frivolous in judgment and in act alike, believed that to him all things were possible. He insulted friends and foes alike. There was never for a month continuity in his foreign policy. By his boastfulness and his widely advertised claim to omnipotence, he alienated all his possible allies. And he drove his country into the war on two faces, against which Bismarck had warned him, with no other allies at the outset than Austria and Hungary.

Bismarck once said that if Germany fought a disastrous war, she would take a generation to recover. And in saying

this he may have been right. But one thing is certain: the disastrous war has come, and has left Germany, weakened, it may be, for a generation, but still united. The dynasty of the Hohenzollerns has gone. The work of Bismarck remains, having survived all the shocks and storms of fate. Look over Europe, and where shall you find a country stronger than Germany? The union, which took place in 1871, is as firm as ever. The Reich has not perished, though the imperial throne is overturned. And the cause of this stability is the solid building of the great architect that was Bismarck. The flight of the Kaiser brought his rule to an end; it did not impair the firm discipline which Bismarck had imposed upon the Empire. And though we have no reason to love Bismarck, who was never a friend to England, we cannot but admire the grandeur of his achievement, and recognise in him a creative artist, who saw the end of his work as soon as he began it, and who allowed no scruple of conscience, no weariness or fatigue to interfere with the service which he did to his fatherland.

The death of Lord Ribblesdale snapped many links which held our modern world to the past, and his 'Impressions and Memories,' which have just been edited with a tact and taste which her father would have approved by Lady Wilson (London: Cassell & Co.), recall the opinions and beliefs of another age. For Lord Ribblesdale was a strayling. He was born into a time which only a wide sympathy and a rare adaptability could have made congenial to him. He survived, the last representative, in life and politics, of many who seem to the altered vision of to-day to have belonged to the years before a grey uniformity and a foolish fear of self-assertion had overtaken us all. He was the last of the Whigs, for whom we have little affection, and in whom we put but little trust. No doubt Dr Johnson was in the right of it when he said that the first Whig was the devil. But sentimental Radicalism and predatory Labour have proved to us that there are far worse devils yet than he who wore the Whig's disguise. Now, Lord Ribblesdale proved his Whiggish sympathy by a profound faith in his order and in the traditions of the great families. As one who had been brought up in the circle of Lord John Russell, he knew how to combine a liking for "reform" and a proper reverence for the caste to which he belonged. A comment which he made upon Lord Hartington helps us to understand his own position. Once upon a time Lord Hartington was dining at Windsor, and made a protest when his four-year-old mutton was ravished from him. "Here, bring that back," he exclaimed, to the consternation of the deferential courtiers, and Lord Ribblesdale, at any rate,

who was present, understood Lord Hartington's temerity. The Queen and he, he writes in his 'Impressions,' "got on very well together. Though Lord Hartington, like Peel and the Duke of Wellington, had neither small talk nor manners]" —Lord Ribbesdale himself had them both by the gift of nature, —"yet he seemed to me less shy with the Queen than with his neighbours. This may be accounted for, perhaps, by their both being absolutely natural, and their both being in no sort of doubt about their positions."

That quality, in truth, was common to the Whigs: they had no sort of doubt about their positions. Their leaders in the House of Lords were always sensitive about the privileges of their order. The members of the great families might espouse the cause of the people when the politics of the moment demanded it, and always with a kind of patronage or even a hint of protest. But their order was impregnable. Lord Ribblesdale has an anecdote which well illustrates this attitude of the Whigs. "Mr Gladstone," he says, "used to tell and enjoy a story of an Admiral Wemyss, who stood for Fife at the time when better education for the people at large became a political question. Admiral Wemyss was told that he might strike something sympathetic in that line on the hustings. He agreed and promised to do so. This is what he said: 'I'm all for the people, d—n them, but I wouldn't educate them, blast them.' The Admiral, said Mr Gladstone, carried all before him, and headed the poll with flying colours." Indeed, this is the paradox of the Whigs. Though they were ready at a moment's notice to introduce and to push through destructive measures, in small matters they were resolutely opposed to change. It fell to the Whigs, to Lord John Russell above all, to break up in 1832 what Mr Gladstone once called "a perfect constitution." Mr Gladstone himself, moreover, was never opposed for long to violent acts of iconoclasm. But when an ancient custom was threatened, he was up in arms at once. It was Lord Ribblesdale's good fortune to be Master of the Buckhounds in 1892. Seldom have a man and an office fitted one another so closely. The spectacle of the gorgeous uniforms, the noble horses, which none could ride better than he, the fine craft of the hounds, were very near to Lord Ribblesdale's heart. And he knew when he took the dignified office that it was already doomed. "The Buckhounds," writes their Master, "were actually under sentence of dissolution, if not of death. The Party newspapers disapproved of them, so did Sir William Harcourt and most of our most trusty leaders." Lord Rosebery, writing to congratulate him on his appointment, addressed him as *morituru*s. Mr Gladstone alone of the leaders

protested against any change. "Your foes are alive again," wrote Gladstone to Lord Ribblesdale, when a series of awkward questions had been asked about the Buckhounds; and the old gentleman could not help asking in a postscript: "How is Guy Fawkes?" Now Guy Fawkes was but a celebrated deer of the time, whose name or aspect had caught and held Mr Gladstone's fancy.

The last of the Whigs might have been also the last of the dandies had he lived in an age and atmosphere still congenial to dandyism. Lord Ribblesdale had in him the making of a Brummel. Lady Wilson says quite truthfully of him that he had "a strong feeling for form in all things—in literature, in art, in dress, and manners." None of his contemporaries rivalled him in the art of decorative adornment. If he did not equal, at least he came near to, Brummel in the management of his cravat. But he lacked the concentration which should belong to the dandy of the first class. His discursiveness was too wide, his accomplishments too many, to permit a genuine rivalry with Brummel. Moreover, he was distracted or solaced by the thing called a heart, of which the hard men of the Regency would have been ashamed. He possessed a quick intelligence, which permitted him to taste, as a connoisseur, the fineness of literature. His interest in the other arts was at once wise and sincere, so that it was inevitable his dandyism should be rather the hobby of a varied life than what it was to Brummel, his whole existence. It was the perfect concentration of Brummel that gave him his superiority. In the common pursuits of life he did not compete with his fellows. He knew himself supreme when he looked at his varnished boots, at his exquisite cravat, at his well-balanced head, which for him was not "a receptacle of intelligence, but a block to sustain the perfect hat." For his own happiness, Lord Ribblesdale had the best of it. If he never touched the height of Brummel's genius, he achieved a success in many fields, and lived out a varied and dignified life, which could never have been his, had he aimed at the solitary grandeur of the complete dandy.

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